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BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

THE CUBAN CRUISER;

Or, The Patriot Captain Afloat and Ashore.



"STAND TO YOUR GUNS, MEN, AND FIGHT IT OUT! LOAD THE FORWARD GUN WITH GRAPE!"

The Cuban Cruiser;

OR,

The Patriot Captain Afloat and Ashore.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "BUFFALO BILL" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MIDSHIPMAN'S LOVE.

Upon the deck of a trim looking vessel of war, flying the flag of Spain, a youth was standing, gazing in admiration upon the scene before him, for the craft was anchored in a port of the Mediterranean Sea.

The harbor, with a town upon its curving shores, a background of hills, dotted here and there with the village of the rich, and an occasional ruin, centuries old, crowning some eminence, met the vision, with vessels at anchor upon the placid waters of the bay.

Among these vessels was a graceful brig of war over which floated the "Stars and Stripes."

The young man upon the Spanish vessel possessed a dark face, handsome, and with the stamp of character and resolution strongly marking it.

His form was graceful, and his uniform as a Midshipman was most becoming to him, while he wore it with the air of one who loved brass buttons and gold lace.

Presently the eye of the Midshipman fell upon a shore boat coming off to the vessel, and soon after he hailed in a clear musical voice:

"Boat ahoy!"

"I would speak with the Senor Edwardo Valiente, Senor, for to him I bear a note," replied the boatman, lifting his cap politely.

"Come alongside my man," and the Middy who was acting as officer of the deck in the absence of a superior, received from the hands of the boatman a missive, scented with the perfume of flowers, and addressed in a delicate feminine hand, that brought a blush to his face as though he knew the writer thereof.

Breaking the seal, he read:

"Villa Casano, Thursday.

"Senor:

"You ask for an interview with me, and I am forced to grant it, so I name the hour of sunset, on the Sea Terrace.

"Do not let any one see you come to the Terrace, and come alone in a boat from the town, landing on the beach near the spot I select to meet you.

"CAMILLE."

"Bless her sweet soul! I could not expect that she would grant me an interview; but, women are hard to fathom, and she has taken my request in earnest. I hardly hoped making an impression upon her in so short a time, for it has been but a dinner at her guardian's villa, a waltz, a love-song together, and I have won her!

"Well, she has won me, I admit, and they say that her guardian holds in keeping an immense fortune for her.

"So be it, though I have a sorry living myself. Ah! but how my brother officers will envy me, and I will have cause to be envied, for here I am, only a Middy, not yet of age, a Cuban by birth, and winning one of Spain's fairest and richest maidens! Edwardo Valiente, you are a lucky dog!"

In his musing he had forgotten the messenger, who stood cap in hand, before him, and now asked:

"Is there an answer, Senor?"

"Yes; I will write one."

"I was told to bring verbal answer of 'Yes,' or 'No.'"

"'Yes' it is, my man, and here is a golden onza for your coming."

The man bowed low at such generosity, and left the ship, while the Midshipman, having read and re-read the note again, pressed it to his lips and placed

it in the inner pocket over the breast, rather enjoying the sensation of having the sweet-scented missive so near the citadel of feeling and emotion—the heart.

As he again turned to glance out over the waters, he beheld a boat going ashore from a Spanish vessel of war which lay at anchor not far from his own craft.

In the stern sheets sat an officer wearing the uniform of a Lieutenant in Spain's navy. He was a man of thirty, with a face that would have been handsome, but that it was marred by dissipation and a certain recklessness of expression.

His glance fell upon the Midshipman as he passed near the young West Indian, and a grim smile, one that seemed to have evil in it, lit up his face, as he coldly nodded in reply to the salute of the young officer.

"There goes Senor Lieutenant Agüero; and I am certain his destination is the villa of Don Ravilez, the guardian of my beautiful Camille. They do say that he holds the Don under his thumb, from some reason, and has openly said that he will marry Camille; but she hates him, as she told me, and with this note from her I hold the winning card, so shall play it at the proper time and the game is mine—mine!"

"I do not like him; in fact, I think he is a dangerous man. He was as black as a thunder cloud when he saw me with Senorita Camille in the moonlight the other night; but I do not dread his winning her, even though Don Ravilez encourages his suit. I only hope his being at the villa to-night will not prevent Camille's coming to the trysting place."

Pacing the deck for a short while longer, absorbed in his own sweet thoughts rather than attending to his duties, his eyes fell upon a boat putting off from the American brig.

There were four oarsmen, a coxswain, and an officer in it, the latter in the uniform of a Midshipman of the United States Navy.

His face was a strong one, and his physique was one to command admiration, though he could scarcely be older than the Spanish Middy.

He had met the young Spaniard at a reception at Don Ravilez's villa, and so, as he passed near, politely saluted, the salute being promptly returned by Edwardo Valiente.

"Now, there goes a man to be jealous of," thought young Valiente, "for all the ladies at the reception the other night fell in love with him, while Camille looked me squarely in the face and said that she thought him the handsomest man she had ever met! These American sailors are certainly heart-breakers the world over.

"But here comes Noros to relieve me, so I will prepare for my trip ashore to meet the beautiful Camille."

An hour after, Midshipman Valiente was upon his way to the town to keep the appointment with the Senorita Camille.

CHAPTER II.

A PLOT THAT CAME TO GRIEF.

The young officer of whom Midshipman Edwardo Valiente had felt a pang of jealousy, on account of Senorita Camille's reference to his good looks, was named Frank Mordaunt. He was a charming fellow, popular with his brother officers, and the crew as well, and as daring as he was brave.

Mordaunt was ashore for an evening off, on pleasure bent.

Arriving at the landing stairs, he treated his boat's crew to a peso, with which to get a glass of grog, and telling them to return for him at midnight, he sauntered up into the town.

His steps led to a fashionable wine cafe, at which he stopped for a late dinner. He was shown into a small apartment, where he ordered a substantial repast, with it a bottle of wine, and then sat down to await its coming.

Presently he heard steps in an adjoining room, and then voices.

He was not intentionally an eaves-

dropper, but as he overheard a certain name, his attention was at once roused.

That name was Camille Ravilez.

"Did you send the note of Senorita to Titan?" was asked.

"I did not send it, Lieutenant Agüero, but carried it myself."

"Ha! you will be known, and—"

"No, Senor; I disguised myself as a boatman, and received from the generous Midshipman a golden onza for my services."

"Well, what said he?"

"That he would be there, Senor."

"At sunset?"

"Yes, Senor."

"My scheme worked well, and her letter to me, anxious to hear what I had to tell her that I hinted would bring sorrow upon her, did she not know how to avert it by knowing all that I knew, just worked like a charm."

"It did, Senor, and the Midshipman never doubted but that the note was written to him, so cleverly did I copy the writing of the Senorita. How fortunate it was that you overheard the Midshipman ask the Senorita to grant him an interview, as he had something to tell her, for it chimed in with your plans!"

"Perfectly; but I believe he meant to warn her against me, for you know we are not the best of friends?"

"Rivals never are, Senor Lieutenant."

"Rivals? Bah! Do you call that boy my rival, Perez?"

"If not, Senor, why wish to get him out of your way?"

"Because I fear he may make known a certain act of my life of which he has knowledge. Did he do so, in spite of my holding Don Ravilez under my thumb, the Senorita would cast me off, and a scandal would result."

"No, I shall meet him at the Terrace at sunset, and you are to be there, Perez."

"Yes, Senor; but, about the Senorita's coming?"

"I wrote her not to come until tomorrow."

"Then all will be well."

"Yes, and his end will quickly come if you do your duty with the weapons."

"I will do mine, Senor, for you pay liberally," was the answer.

Then there was silence, a clinking of glasses, and retiring footsteps followed.

"Well, I have been let into a little secret, it seems. I wonder who the victim is? A Spanish Midshipman apparently, and I must take sides with him against a secret foe, though we are under different flags. I will just about have time to eat my dinner and then stroll leisurely to the place of meeting to be in hiding and watch affairs as they develop," and Midshipman Mordaunt twirled the end of his mustache with the air of one who had an important matter upon his hands, but in which he took sincere satisfaction.

His dinner now put an end to his reveries, and after having discussed it with considerable relish, he lighted a fragrant cigar and walked toward the environs of the town.

The villa of Don Ravilez was surrounded by extensive ornamental grounds, with a sea terrace that overlooked the harbor. It was a lovely but lonely spot, sheltered by orange and olive trees. A rustic arbor was there, where one could sit and behold the beautiful view spread out before him, of the vessel-dotted bay and the town, a mile away.

Selecting a clump of olive trees as a good hiding place, Midshipman Mordaunt complacently awaited developments.

He had not long to wait, for there approached along the beach a man dressed as a civilian. It was the sinister faced Lieutenant, who had so grimly smiled when saluted by the Spanish Middy, Edwardo Valiente, on shipboard, that afternoon.

He approached the arbor, and entering it, was lost to sight.

Soon after another man approached along the road, leaped the wall, and also entered the arbor.

"There are the two whom I heard plotting devilry. Now for the coming of the Spanish Middy," mused the Midshipman.

He had not long to wait, for a boat came swiftly along the shore, and in it was but one occupant.

Running it upon the beach, Midshipman Eduardo Valiente leaped upon the shore. He was dressed in his best uniform and looked very happy.

Scaling the sea-wall, he approached the arbor, and was suddenly confronted by the Spanish Lieutenant and his companion, Perez.

The young West Indian started at seeing them, and stepped back a pace, evidently at a loss to understand their presence there, at such a time; but Lieutenant Aguero left him no time for thought.

"Midshipman Valiente, I am here to punish you for daring to ask the Senorita Camille to meet you. You wear a sword, Senor, and I will waive the fact that you are my inferior in rank and will fight you."

Eduardo Valiente quickly recovered from his surprise at these words.

"I wear a sword, Senor Aguero, yes, but I do not acknowledge your right to call me to account for asking Senorita Ravilez to meet me here, as you say."

"I have the right, Senor, as that lady's intended husband."

"I do not believe you have her consent, though you may have the sanction of her uncle and guardian."

"Do you mean to doubt my word?"

"I know so much of you, Senor Aguero, that I put no faith in your word, even though you are a Spanish officer."

"By heavens! boy, but you will eat your words!"

"I do not fear you, Lieutenant Aguero, but if you wish to force a fight upon me, let me at least have a second."

"My friend here, Senor Perez, will act as second for us both."

"Senor Perez has not a very good reputation, and is your friend, not mine."

"Insult upon insult! You shall fight now, and with swords! If they fail, we can use pistols, and Senor Perez shall act for us both."

"I see that it is your intention to murder me, Senor Aguero, but I am at bay, so must meet you without a second, for myself."

"Yes, you shall fight me, and now," fiercely retorted Lieutenant Aguero, advancing menacingly.

"Permit me, Senor Valiente, to act as your second, for I was seated in the arbor and overheard what passed," and Frank Mordaunt walked up to the little group.

Aguero muttered an oath and glanced at Perez, who also growled a malediction upon the American, in a vicious undertone.

"Oh, Senor, I thank you. You are most kind to help me out of an awkward scrape," and Valiente warmly grasped the hand of the American.

"I will be more than happy to serve you," assured Mordaunt.

Both Aguero and Perez, his tool, knew the American officer. They were caught in a scrape and could but get out of it by accepting the situation, so they pretended to yield gracefully.

The two seconds then examined the weapons of the Lieutenant and the Midshipman, for Aguero had brought his sword and pistols along under the cloak he wore, and the principals took their positions.

Aguero was known to be a dead shot as well as a most skillful swordsman. He had fought several fatal duels, and was therefore much dreaded.

But Valiente held no fear of him and felt confidence in his own skill, so the swords crossed with a sharp clash, and the fight began in earnest.

Having gone there, with the aid of Perez to kill the Midshipman, either with the sword or pistol, Aguero's disappointment at being foiled by the young American was such that his anger made him reckless, and to his dismay he was disarmed by his antagonist.

"Maledito! Has my hand lost its cunning?" he cried, at his discomfiture, for, instead of running his rival through the body, he saw the young swordsman quietly sheath his sword, with the remark:

"Senor, I am not jealous of you, so do not care to kill you. You would have murdered me; that was your purpose, I know; but, I spare you—now."

"You shall meet me again, Senor Valiente, and with pistols," cried Aguero, furiously.

"The Senor is unreasonable," interposed Mordaunt.

"I have given him his life, but I will meet him again, if he so persists," was Valiente's indifferent response.

Perez at once tried some sharp practice about the loading of the pistols, as he alone had ammunition; but Midshipman Mordaunt was watchful, and the weapons were properly charged.

Then the duelists took their places, ten paces apart. Mordaunt gave the word, "Fire!" and the pistols cracked almost together.

Aguero fell to the ground, while Valiente was unhurt; but, at the instant, behind him came a cry of alarm, and upon the scene rushed a young girl.

"Senorita Camille, this is no scene for you to witness," Frank Mordaunt protested as he advanced.

"What does it mean?" demanded the maiden, who was indeed a beautiful girl.

"A duel on my uncle's grounds between Senors Valiente and Aguero, and the latter, I fear, severely wounded?" and she continued looking from one to the other of those present.

"It is worse, Senorita, for that young devil has given me my death wound," faintly spoke Aguero.

"It is but just that he should kill you, Senor Aguero, for I overheard your plot to get him here purposely to kill him. Senorita Ravilez, did you write this man Aguero, appointing a meeting with him here about this time?" and Mordaunt turned to the maiden.

"I did, because he told me that he could, if I would meet him here, avert a fearful calamity upon those dear to me."

"Well, Senorita, it seems he used your letter in another envelope addressed to Senor Valiente, and he having asked you to meet him, thought the note was to him, for I overheard all that passed between Aguero and his cutthroat hireling here. They plotted to force Senor Valiente into a duel which would prove fatal, so I came ahead of them to thwart their game of murder, for murder it was intended to be—deliberate assassination."

"Ah, Senor, how grateful I am to you for having exposed that man's treachery, for he has been like a cloud of ill-omen upon me. He holds some power over my guardian, and had Don Ravilez's consent to marry me; but, Senor, I am already secretly engaged to my cousin, whom I love devotedly," and tears came into the eyes of the little flirt, while Eduardo groaned as he saw his love dream fade away like mist.

"Senorita, will you return to the villa, for the Senor Aguero is dead, while I have his body removed to his vessel?" and Frank Mordaunt arose from bending over the officer who had died in silence, at their feet.

"Ah, Senor! this is terrible!" cried Camille, and she turned hurriedly away.

"Senor Valiente, I will remain by the body, and also guard this man, if you will return to your vessel and send a boat here, for I will appear against this fellow, Perez. Let me urge that you at once report the affair to your commanding officer, and refer to me as one who overheard Senor Aguero's plot to kill you."

Valiente grasped the hand of the man who had saved his life, and turned away, walking rapidly to his boat.

Thus began the friendship of the two leading characters of our story, and who, years after, went through thrilling adventures together under the war flag of the Cuban patriots—and whose deeds of

daring form the foundation of my romance, while there is so much of truth in it that many will recognize the characters who figure in these pages.

CHAPTER III.

ARMING FOR THE FRAY.

"Hark!" and the clear though distant notes of a bugle rose and fell upon the still night air, and echoed and re-echoed back from the dark sides of the forest-clad mountains of Cuba.

"We must onward, Eduardo, and reach the rendezvous as soon as possible, for without doubt our retreat in the mountains has been discovered, and ere long the Spaniards will be upon us," and, shaking his bridle rein, the speaker urged his horse forward, followed by his companion, who, like himself, was mounted upon a splendid steed.

Over hill and dale the two horsemen speeded, and in a short while rode out of the bright moonlight into the deep shades of the mountains; but, as though perfectly acquainted with the road, they did not slacken their speed, and continued on at the same rapid gallop until they struck a bridle path, which soon brought them into a strange scene in those dark and gloomy woods.

Around a blazing fire stood a large number of men dressed in a light gray uniform, and wearing black slouched hats. All were well armed, while tied to the surrounding trees were horses, saddled and ready for the moment.

"Welcome! Mordaunt, you have come, and you also, Eduardo; we need have no fear now," said a tall, handsome man, advancing to meet the two horsemen as they dismounted near the fire.

"Yes, Antonio, we left the coast shortly after dark. The yacht is in the cove awaiting us, and we must now get ready for the ride. I fear it will be a desperate one, for we heard a Spanish cavalry bugle in the valley as we came along, and without doubt they are going to attack us," answered the person whom the Cuban had addressed as Mordaunt.

"Then I will at once commence distributing the ammunition and weapons we have here in the cave, that all may arm for the fight," returned the other, whose dark face and fiery black eyes plainly indicated his Cuban origin.

"Do so, and the party who accompany Eduardo and myself, in the yacht, I will call hither and instruct as to their duties."

The camp was at once a scene of apparent confusion. Men hurried hither and thither; torches flashed among the trees; arms and ammunition were distributed; saddle-girths and bridles were looked to, and after half an hour the party was ready for the march.

Slowly wound that body of horsemen adown the mountain side like spectres, for, save the tread of hoofs, no sound broke upon the quiet of the night.

At the head of the column rode the three known as Mordaunt, Eduardo, and Antonio, and the whispers that occasionally passed between them, proved that their expedition was one of danger, perhaps of life or death adventure.

With reins well in hand the horsemen descended the steep slope, safely adown the rugged path, and soon came from the gloomy woods into the open valley, now lit up by a full moon.

"Halt!"

The column stopped, while Mordaunt pointed down the valley.

"Look yonder! Be ready men!"

The object of this caution was soon apparent, for a long line of flashing light quivered before them as it steadily approached the mountain.

"Spanish infantry on the march coming to attack us, but we are ahead of them," remarked Antonio.

"Yes, and we must give them a surprise. Form your men in the edge of the woods, Antonio, and when they come near us, I will give the order and we must charge through them. See! they have a squadron of cavalry! They will follow us, so we will have a running

fight to the coast," and Mordaunt spoke rapidly but firmly.

The band of horsemen, about a hundred in number, were now stationed so as to meet the coming foe, and all watched with eager glance the moving mass of infantry as it approached, looking like a monster serpent, as the long line of bayonets glittered in the moonlight and the column wound along the road.

Slowly and silently the moving line approached the mountain, advanced until the head of the column entered the shadows; then came the loud, and to the Spaniards, startling cry:

"Cubans, charge!"

Like an avalanche from the mountain side the band of horsemen swept down upon the Spaniards with deafening yells; and in a moment the hitherto quiet night was filled with the roar of firearms, the cry of combatants, and the clash of sabers, while the silvery light of the moon paled before the bright red flashes of the guns.

The rallying cries of the Spanish officers were heard on all sides; the neighing of frightened horses, the shrieks of the wounded, and the heavy tread of the men and horses mingling in the fight, all made up a wild scene of man's fury against his fellow men.

But above all, the clear voice of Mordaunt broke upon the air. The Cuban patriots heard and were cheered by its stern, fearless tones, and, though greatly outnumbered, the patriots fought with a determined courage which soon began to clear for them a path through the Spaniard's solid rank.

"On men, on! One more dash!" and with a wild hurrah, that was heard far across the valley, the Cubans broke through the opposing lines, and with rapid gallop, moved down the mountain road, followed by a volley of musketry that emptied several saddles.

But on sped the survivors across the country, and for miles they did not pause in their flight until, upon ascending a hill, the distant gulf broke upon their view.

"We will draw rein here, Antonio, for a few moments' breathing time," announced Mordaunt, halting and throwing himself from his saddle.

"That was a desperate fight, Mordaunt," observed Edwardo, following his friend's example.

"Indeed it was, and may be repeated if they follow us to the coast," chimed in Antonio, approaching.

A few minutes' rest, and the order to mount again was given, when a courier from the rear dashed up and said:

"Captain Mordaunt, we are followed."

"All right; that squadron of cavalry is after us, so we must turn and meet them, ride them down, and then continue on to the seashore. Be ready men!" came the ringing command.

The sound of rapidly approaching hoofs was heard, and soon a body of horsemen dashed to the top of the hill.

A volley of pistol shots from the Cubans greeted them, and then followed the clear order:

"Charge! my braves; charge!"

With whirlwind speed and force the patriots were upon the Spanish cavalry, who, becoming demoralized, turned and fled in all directions, leaving a considerable number of their dead or wounded upon the field.

"Again for the coast, men!"

Once more the Cubans sped onward, and after half an hour's ride halted in a grove of trees that crowned an arm of land jutting out into the sea, and thereby formed a small harbor or cove at its base.

Upon the quiet waters of this little water-covert a small yacht was riding at anchor.

"Antonio, have your troop in readiness for return to the mountains as soon as I am safely on board with my men. Return by the upper road and thereby avoid another fight, for, with the losses we have sustained to-night it would be

best to get back without incurring any greater risk than is necessary."

"I agree with you, Mordaunt. I will go at once to the beach and embark your men, while you and Edwardo join the ladies upon the cliff, for your servant, Bueno, has brought you word that they await you there. When all is in readiness I will send for you."

The Cuban turned and walked away, while Mordaunt, calling to Edwardo to accompany him, the two passed quickly along the wooded slope until they came to the end of the arm of land which broke precipitously into the ocean, forming thereby a high, rocky cliff.

CHAPTER IV. THE FAREWELL.

Standing upon the summit of the point of land which formed the sheltering arm of the little bay were the two ladies who awaited the coming of Mordaunt and Edwardo.

They had been gazing listlessly upon the moonlit waters, watching the graceful motions of the little yacht as it rose and fell upon the bosom of the ocean, and were only recalled from their silent admiration of the beautiful vessel by the sound of rapidly approaching hoofs.

"Listen, Inez; the troops have come from the mountain, and Mordaunt and Edwardo will soon be with us."

"Go, Bueno, and tell them we await them here," urged one of the maidens.

"Si, Senorita," and the speaker, a large, fine looking negro, who had been standing near, hurried away.

In a short while Mordaunt and Edwardo approached and received an affectionate greeting from the maidens, such a greeting, in fact, as the most careless observer must have discovered could have been only between lovers.

For a moment the group stood in silent admiration of the scene; then one of the maidens turning and resting her little hand upon the arm of her lover, said quietly:

"How beautiful, how quiet the sea looks to-night, Edwardo, and yet it may soon be your grave, and then to me it can never look beautiful again."

"You must not let such sad thoughts fill your mind, Nita, but only remember that upon the ocean I am soon to strike a blow for Cuba's freedom and win a name for myself."

"But, dear, in three months, perhaps less, I will be again on this coast, with arms and munitions of war for our struggling countrymen, and the good it will do is well worth the risk I will run," answered Edwardo, while his face lit up with patriotic enthusiasm.

"Grant, Oh! Mary, Mother, this our prayer!" and as she spoke the languid eyes of the Cuban maiden were raised heavenward, while the tears that rolled down her cheeks glistened like diamonds in the moonlight.

"Amen!"

The word was spoken in the full rich tones of Mordaunt, who, with his fair companion leaning upon his arm, had listened in silence to the conversation of the others.

"Edwardo," he continued, "your sister Inez has promised me her hand when the Lone Star Flag of the young republic shall float undisputed over this island. Have I your sanction?"

"Indeed you have, Mordaunt, for no nobler man lives than you are, and this will be another link to bind us more closely together in the stormy times before us, and—"

"The men are all on board, Sir."

The voice broke rudely upon the little group, for, wrapped up in their own affairs, they had not observed the approach of the man who spoke.

"Very well, Carlos; we will be upon the beach in a moment," answered Mordaunt; and, as the tall sinister faced but gentlemanly looking Cuban turned away, he continued:

"Edwardo, I do not believe Carlos Aguilera can be trusted. I must tell Antonio to keep a close watch upon him."

"I hope your impressions are unfounded, Mordaunt, for though I do not like Carlos, I would not believe him a traitor to Cuba. But come; we must be off!" urged Edwardo.

While the party are descending to the beach let us make the reader better acquainted with those who are to become important characters in this narrative of thrilling scenes enacted on sea and land, under the auspices of the lost struggle of the patriot Cubans for liberty.

Frank Mordaunt was, as has been stated, an American and a Southerner, who had been brought up a Midshipman in the United States Navy, and having taken arms with the South during the civil war, had served with distinction as a naval officer in the Confederate service.

Suffering greatly from the disastrous result of the struggle, he had left the country, and after a year's wandering had been influenced by an old Cuban planter, a friend of his father in former years, to dispose of his American property and settle in Cuba.

Mordaunt, following the advice of his old friend, who regarded him as an adopted son, made his plantation his home, and thus became a citizen of the island and formed strong attachments for his Cuban friends and the land of his adoption; so he willingly joined with the patriots upon the commencement of hostilities between them and the Spanish government for Cuban independence.

With an elegant figure, slightly above the medium height, Frank Mordaunt possessed a strikingly handsome face, upon which twenty-eight years of life had fallen lightly.

His hair was dark brown, and a heavy moustache, a shade darker, half hid the firm expression upon his mouth that would have given his face a stern and bitter look were it not for a certain sad light that shone from his eyes, which were otherwise black and piercing.

His brother officer, Edwardo Valiente, as has been said, was a Cuban by birth, and it was years before, when a Midshipman in the Spanish navy that he had met Mordaunt when their respective vessels were cruising in the Mediterranean, under circumstances already narrated.

At the death of his father, Edwardo had resigned his commission, and, returning to Cuba, had become the head of the plantation, his mother and sister, Inez, being his only other relatives.

Somewhat the junior of Mordaunt, Edwardo was equally striking in appearance, being in stature above the average height of his race.

His hair and eyes were black and the contour of his face exceedingly fine and full of expression.

From the first raising of the Cuban flag by Cespedes, Edwardo had taken an active part in the patriot cause, and had easily induced Frank Mordaunt to side with him.

Together they had arranged a plan, aided by a few of their Cuban friends, to leave the island and seek the shores of the United States where they would be able to arm and equip a privateer with which to strike a blow for the freedom of their beloved island.

Through the kindness of an American gentleman who was yachting along the Cuban coast, and who was an old navy chum of Mordaunt, an opportunity had at length offered for the two patriots to leave the island and enter upon their undertaking.

For this purpose a little group had gathered upon the point of rocks on the moonlight evening just described.

Nita Gonzalez and Inez Valiente were two of Cuba's most beautiful daughters, possessing the dark lustrous eyes and rich complexions of that land of lovely women.

Inez was Edwardo's only sister, and the fair young girl had soon won the love of Frank Mordaunt, and to the young American she gave her whole heart in return.

Nita, the only child of Don Gonzalez, a wealthy Cuban planter, had known Ed-

wardo from her earliest girlhood, and before he entered the navy the two were devoted lovers.

Descending from the cliff, the little party walked down the beach until they came near a group of a dozen or more men who were conversing in low tones and preparing to embark in two small boats that were resting, with an oarsman in each, a few yards from the shore.

"Well, are all ready, Antonio?" asked Mordaunt, of a young Cuban who approached him.

"Yes, Sir; the men are all on the yacht, excepting the few you see here, and your servant, Bueno."

"Thanks; we will be ready in an instant. Antonio you will now be the commander of our little band on shore, and I know you will do your duty. Keep a bright lookout on the coast for us, after a few months, and heaven grant we may bring you ample aid. I charge you to keep a bright lookout upon Carlos Aguiá, for my suspicions are that he is not true to our cause."

"Trust all to me, Mordaunt, and I will do everything in my power to carry out your views," answered Antonio Munoz, who was a young Cuban like Edwardo, a planter of wealth, and willing to offer heart, body and riches for the sake of his loved Cuba.

At this moment Edwardo walked up and offering his hand to Antonio, said:

"Munoz, old fellow, I have told Nita and Inez that you would see them safely home to Buena Vista, and I know that you will do all you can to protect my mother and sister when I am gone."

"I will, Edwardo, I will; and if the country gets dangerous around here, I will urge the Senora, your mother, and Senorita Inez, to accept Senor Gonzalez's invitation and go to his plantation to reside, for it will be safe there for them."

A few more parting words and cordial grasps of the hands all around, then Mordaunt and Edwardo sprang into one of the boats, followed by Bueno, Frank's negro servant.

The other boat had already preceded them, so Frank gave the order. A moment after the little skiff was moving rapidly toward the yacht which lay some distance from the shore. Arriving alongside the two officers sprang upon the deck of the "Geraldine" and were welcomed by the owner, a young American yachtsman who had offered to convey the party from the island to New Orleans.

In a few moments the Geraldine was under full sail, her prow turned seaward; and, driven forward by a good wind, she soon was dashing the silvery spray from her sharp bows, rapidly leaving the island and those who were watching her flight with such anxiety.

CHAPTER V.

PLOTTING AND COUNTER-PLOTTING.

Arriving in the United States, Mordaunt and Edwardo presented their credentials from Cespedes to the Cuban Junta, and at once set about their search for a suitable vessel.

After some days they accidentally hit upon the very craft for their undertaking, a long, rakish three-masted schooner of three hundred and fifty tons burden, and a perfect model of beauty.

This schooner was at once purchased, and, after days and nights of toil, was safely loaded with the arms, munitions and provisions necessary, and dispatched from New York under the command of Edwardo, to the coast of Maine, where Mordaunt had appointed a rendezvous to join the schooner after all his arrangements for sailing had been perfected.

From Battery Park the young American watched the beautiful vessel as she sped down the harbor, and at last losing sight of her, he turned with a sigh of relief, when he discovered standing near him a Cuban whom he had last seen in Havana, and whom he knew to be friendly to Spain.

Catching his eye, the Cuban advanced with extended hand, exclaiming:

"Why, Mordaunt! You here? How glad I am to meet you!"

Mordaunt could not return the compliment, but answered:

"Yes, De Vega. I have been in the United States a week or two. It was getting disagreeable to live in Cuba."

"Yes, I see, especially as you sympathize with the rebels, or I believe you do."

"Yes, my sympathy is with the patriots."

"Have you friends leaving on that vessel, that you watch her departure so closely?" suggested the Cuban.

"I have, De Vega. The commander is an old friend of mine; but I must leave you. I am stopping at the New York Hotel; come and see me there," and, with a bow, Frank Mordaunt walked away from De Vega—a man whom he had never liked, and whom he felt confident was acting the spy upon his movements.

Gazing after the retreating figure of Mordaunt, De Vega stood in silence for a moment, and then said to himself:

"Well, Senor Mordaunt, you think you have thrown dust in my eyes. I well know of all your plans, and will thwart you yet. Do not think you can throw me off your track, for if I stop the expedition you are to command, I get ten thousand dollars, and that is a great deal of money."

Still feeling that the Cuban was a spy upon him, Mordaunt called a carriage and drove rapidly to the headquarters of the Cuban Junta, where he made known the safe departure of the schooner.

"Now, to get the men off safely to join the schooner outside to-night I have determined to have them all taken on board the yacht lying off the foot of Thirty-fourth street," he explained to the assembled members of the Junta.

"She can easily stow away sixty men," he continued, "and under the different officers we can safely arrange affairs."

"For instance, let Lieutenant Herbert take his squad of men down to Sandy Hook and join me off that point; Lieutenant Rudolph can join us off Staten Island Ferry, while Duke can take the remainder of the men at once on board the yacht and conceal them below. I will go to my hotel and complete my arrangements for leaving, and toward evening join the yacht at her anchorage. In this way we will attract no attention and can get safely out of the harbor, and, as there is a stiff breeze blowing, will join the schooner outside to-night."

The plan of Mordaunt was considered a good one, so messengers were at once sent for the different officers, and upon their arrival the prearranged orders were given them, and they departed to get their men together and repair to their separate positions.

Mordaunt bade the Cuban patriots good-by with many warm wishes from them for his success; then he went aboard the yacht, and to one of the men whom he had appointed an under officer, he said:

"Ah! Brinkley, I am glad you have come. Have the boat ready for the men as they arrive, and as soon as they are on board make them go below and keep them there."

"I will return in an hour or two, and I wish you to be ready to sail at a moment's notice."

"Ay, ay, Sir!" and the sailor, who was an old man-of-wars-man, touched his hat politely.

Going to his hotel, Mordaunt told his servant, Bueno, to at once get his baggage ready and in a carriage to drive down to the wharf near the yacht and take his things on board.

"Yes, Massa Mordaunt; no fear but I attend to it all right;" and Bueno, delighted at the prospect of the fun, as he called it, made his preparation with alacrity, and half an hour after was on board the vessel.

Mordaunt left the hotel and was about

entering a carriage when the dark eyes of De Vega caught his, and from the look in them he felt assured that his plans were practically known to the fellow and that he was under the spy's surveillance.

To throw him off his guard, Mordaunt turned and said pleasantly:

"Well, De Vega, I was just going out, but seeing you here, I judge you have come to make me the promised visit."

"Yes, Mordaunt; I did come up to see you; but do not let me detain you."

"It is no matter; any other time will do," and Mordaunt dismissed the hackman and invited his friend into the hotel.

"I have a friend with me that I would like to introduce," informed the spy.

"Certainly; bring him in!" and De Vega, calling to a gentleman who was standing near, introduced him as a "Mr. Denton."

At a glance the young captain recognized his as a United States Marshal, who had before been pointed out to him as under the pay of the Spanish Consul.

Seeing that there was some plot on hand, Mordaunt determined to play a bold game and counteract it; so, extending his hand, he said:

"Mr. Denton, I am happy to meet you; and as I was about to ask Mr. De Vega, I will also extend the invitation and request that you will go to Delmonico's and dine with me. It is rather early for dinner, but I have an engagement to-night."

The invitation was accepted, and the three repaired to the restaurant, where Mordaunt ordered a sumptuous repast.

For an hour the three men sat at their dinner, the United States Marshal and De Vega drinking deeply, while Mordaunt pretended to do the same.

Seeing that the two were very much affected by the wine, he rose from the table with some excuse, settled his bill, left the restaurant, and entering a carriage, drove to Thirty-fourth street.

As the hack turned from Broadway into the street, it drew up for a moment to let a car go by, and Mordaunt saw almost within reach of his arm, the dark, wicked face of Carlos Aguiá!

Their eyes met, and each recognized the other!

But the carriage drove on and no word passed between them, only that look, and it spoke volumes to both.

Glancing through the back window, Mordaunt saw Aguiá start and watch, and then jump on a down-town car which was passing.

"He is on my track also, I feel convinced; but I have been too quick for them," he decided, and as he drew up at the wharf, he sprang out, and entering the small boat which was awaiting him, was soon on board the yacht.

The anchor was soon up, and under a stiff breeze the little craft started rapidly down the river, keeping well over toward the Jersey shore.

When near the foot of Twenty-third street, a boat with a dozen or more men was described putting off from the Hoboken side, and Mordaunt with his glass recognized Lieutenant Duke and his party.

Standing over toward them, he was hailed by the Lieutenant; a rope was thrown to the boat, and, without checking her speed, the men passed upon the yacht's deck.

"Well done, Duke! Now cast off your boat, and let the boatmen take it back," ordered Mordaunt; and hastily directing all the men except his Lieutenant, below, he took the helm and stood on down the harbor.

In like manner the parties under Rudolph and Herbert were taken on board, and a few hours after starting, the signal lights of the schooner were descried. Standing down toward her, signals were exchanged, and after a short delay the men were safely transferred; then the yacht returned to New York under her crew of three, but with Mordaunt and his servant, Bueno, on board.

The schooner started for the rendezvous appointed, on the coast of Maine.

CHAPTER VI.

CASCO BAY.

Many of my readers have no doubt heard of or seen Portland, Maine, justly called the "Forest City," on account of the great number of magnificent trees which grow in and around it. Not only is the city itself very handsome, but its situation is one of the finest in the country.

Built up on a peninsula, almost an island, it has in its front the grand harbor of which so much has been said and written. At either end the land rises to the height of a hundred or more feet. The fine promenades are laid out, and upon these are seats where pleasure seekers can go and enjoy the lovely scenery around, and, looking far out to sea, watch the inward bound vessels as they come ploughing up the harbor, past the white forts on either side, and drop anchor under the shadow of the city.

Upon a lovely evening, a few days after the incidents just related, a group of persons was gathered upon the eastern promenade watching the rapid advance of a large three-masted schooner that was entering the harbor with all sail set, and many comments were made upon her fine qualities and the seamanlike manner in which she was handled.

Standing near the group and yet seemingly not noticed by any of them were two persons who already had attracted some attention.

One was a young man whose handsome appearance had won the admiration of a number of the fair women in the group, and the other was a tall well-formed negro, with a bright face and fine eyes. Both of them were gazing intently upon the approaching schooner when a man in seaman's garb asked the young gentlemen:

"Do you know anything about that craft, sir?"

"I am a stranger here, sir, and am merely amusing myself in looking around your beautiful city," answered the person addressed.

"Well, I knew you were a stranger, and from the South, I guess, from your manner of talk; but I seen you looking at that craft with a sailor's eye, and thought you might know something of her," returned the other.

"I am sorry I can give you no information regarding her. I was brought up a sailor, and was admiring the beauty of the craft."

"I knew it. Now, I have followed the sea, as man and boy, nigh on to forty years, and yet I never in my life saw a prettier craft and one more skillfully handled. It ain't often you see a craft like that come into Casco Bay, and if they do, they are never handled in that seamanlike manner. You see, I am an old tar and know something about these things."

As if desirous of hearing the old seaman talk, the stranger asked:

"Well, Jack, what do you make her out?"

"I think she is one of those pleasure yachts that our young Americans are going over the world in, now; and if she drops anchor off in the stream I am certain of it," and the old sailor looked as if he thought all present should be impressed with his superior knowledge.

The stranger walked off a little distance from the group, and calling to his black companion, said:

"Bueno, go down to the hotel and get my valise ready, and as soon as it is dark, come back here."

"I will remain and await you, and if Edwardo anchors where I directed him to he can easily send ashore a boat without attracting attention, and we will be far away from Casco Bay before daylight."

The negro started away at once, while Mordaunt, whom the reader has no doubt recognized ere this, stood and watched the schooner as she came gliding up the harbor.

When off the promenade she rounded to, took in sail, and dropped anchor.

Upon her deck a group of half a dozen men were gathered, and an officer was seen closely eyeing the group on the promenade through a glass. Noting this, Mordaunt walked away by himself, took off his hat, and taking out his handkerchief, drew it across his face several times.

It was a natural act, and attracted no attention from the crowd, but was instantly answered by the officer on the schooner, who waved his hat twice around his head.

"So far, so good; now for night to come!" muttered Mordaunt, and as the shades of evening began to darken earth, sea and sky, his face grew brighter.

Night came on; the crowd dispersed; but Mordaunt remained and began to pace up and down with impatient tread while awaiting the return of Bueno.

That worthy at length made his appearance, carrying in his hands a valise and roll of blankets; then, together, master and servant descended the steep pathway toward the water's edge.

"Sound that mocking bird note of yours, Bueno!" commanded the captain; and in obedience to the order Bueno placed his fingers to his mouth and imitated the sweet notes of a bird.

A few moments after a dark object was seen approaching through the gloom; the sound of muffled oars was heard; a boat grounded upon the beach, and, springing out, Edwardo grasped his captain's hand, exclaiming:

"Thank heavens, Frank, we meet again!"

"Indeed, I am thankful, Ed; but shove off; we must return at once to the schooner and up anchor and start for the rendezvous up Casco Bay."

"Give way, men!" was the order, in a low tone, from Edwardo, and, in a short while, Mordaunt stood upon the deck of his beautiful vessel.

"I'll take the helm, Edwardo, as I know the channel. Show no lights and do not put on too much sail. Thank heavens, it is a dark night. Now, up anchor!"

The light vessel swung round to the breeze, the ripple of waves sounded beneath her prow, and the schooner ran merrily up the island-dotted bay, leaving the thousand lights of Portland far behind.

After a circuitous run of several hours through the numerous islands of Casco Bay, Mordaunt put the helm up and stood in toward a dark island which rose about two hundred feet above the water, and which seemed larger than the others they had passed.

"Take in all sail but her jib, Edwardo. I must run her carefully in here," and the schooner, with only her jib set, glided slowly in toward the high promontory that jutted far out into the ocean.

Just as all on board imagined she would strike against the rocks, a small opening was discovered in the cliffs, and the beautiful vessel, obedient to her helm, floated through the narrow enclosure, and in another moment was in the still waters of a rock-bound cove or bay.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ISLAND HOME AND ISLAND QUEEN.

The sun shone bright and beautiful over that rock island in Casco Bay where the schooner had sought refuge the night before.

The island was not large, containing only about one hundred acres, and on all sides it was steep and dangerous to approach except to a skillful pilot.

To the north it rose to the height of two hundred feet, and at this point was the harbor spoken of, no opening to which could be seen a few fathoms from the land.

In this basin the sides were all steep, except in one place, where there was a

few rods of beach, and a narrow valley leading back into the island, which was fertile and covered with a forest of fine trees.

As the schooner lay in the haven nothing could be seen of her from a passing vessel, the rocks towering above her masts, so that a more secluded hiding place could not have been found.

Living upon the island was a fisherman and his wife, and their only child, a daughter of eighteen.

For years this family had dwelt there, and though the fisherman would never refer to his past life, it was believed by Mordaunt and the few others who knew of his existence that he had fled there to avoid punishment for crime committed in his younger days.

Anyhow, Dick Hill, as he called himself, never went out of sight of his island home, but was contented with going out in his smack for fishing, and in cultivating the island, while his wife, a quiet, good-natured woman, also seemed perfectly contented with her lonely lot.

Their daughter, May, was as bright and beautiful as the month after which she was named, and amused herself in various ways. She would help her mother in her work, and study her lessons, in which Dick Hill, who was quite well educated, instructed her. No cares or sorrow came near her, and in their isolated life she apparently was entirely happy.

She was a thorough sailor, for her father had carried her with him in his little ten-ton sloop on his fishing excursions, and she had ridden out many a stormy night with him, and stood at the helm and run the little vessel safely into the haven.

During the Confederate war Mordaunt was running from Halifax into Southern ports with a blockader of which he was second officer, and in a fearful gale the steamer was cast upon Hill's island. Frank was the only survivor of the wreck, and being rescued by Hill and carried to the hut, he was found to have sustained serious injuries.

Through a long illness he was faithfully cared for by the fisherman and his wife and daughter, and as he grew better, it was May's pleasure to be his constant companion.

Thus the young girl of twelve and the young officer became great friends, and under her guidance Frank learned to pilot in and out of the haven, and acquired valuable information connected with the coast.

After three months' stay upon the island he prevailed upon Hill to carry him to the nearest port, and bidding farewell to his kind friends, he went aboard the little sloop with the fisherman, and the day afterward was landed on Cape Elizabeth, near Portland. Hill instantly put off to sea again, seemingly afraid to be seen near the haunts of men.

Since that time Mordaunt had never heard from his friends upon the island, but remembering, when he intended fitting out a Cuban privateer, the security of the place, had determined to make it his rendezvous.

When Hill arose in the morning, after the coming in of the schooner, he was horrified to see a vessel lying quietly at anchor in his little harbor, and as he turned to retrace his steps toward his home he saw before him Frank Mordaunt.

Explanations followed, and Frank having assured the fisherman that no harm would come to him or his family by his presence there, and that, in a few days, he would leave with all his men, going out at night as he had come in, so that no clue could be gained of the channel into the island, Hill was satisfied, more especially as the Cuban captain promised a liberal remuneration for the use of his home.

"Now go and tell the madam and little May that I am coming with a friend to breakfast with them, and I will send my colored boy, Bueno, with a present from my ship."

While Dick hurried off to tell his wife

and daughter the wonderful news, Frank returned to his ship, and selecting a few of his choicest stores and a half dozen bottles of wine, he gave them to Bueno, telling him to follow.

Calling to Edwardo, Mordaunt said:

"Ed, I wish you to go with me to call upon some friends, and I will introduce you to a lovely little girl. You have heard of my shipwreck, and how I was saved. Well, this is the island I was cast away upon, and those to whom I will present you are the ones who nursed me through months of sickness, and thereby saved my life."

"Indeed, I will be glad to meet them; but, Frank, we couldn't have found a place better suited to our plans. What an enchanting island!"

"Yes, Massa Edwardo, there's a mighty enchanting young lady here, too! I seen her this morning through the bushes, but she did not see me," put in Bueno.

"I'll be bound for you, Bueno, seeing all that is going on around you," responded his master.

They quickly came in sight of the long, low, vine-clad hut, which contained three rooms and was built of forest timber and pieces of wrecks which had been cast ashore.

Near by stood a few cattle, sheep and pigs, while lying in front of the door were two large Newfoundland dogs, who sprang up as the strangers came in sight.

As the party approached the hut, a lovely form bounded forth, her long dark hair streaming behind her, her face flushed and joy in her eyes; and before Mordaunt could reconcile himself that this was little May, her pretty arms were clasped around his neck, and a shower of kisses rained upon his lips in perfect girlish abandon.

Captain Mordaunt's face turned crimson as he greeted the young girl, and turning, presented his friend to her.

Edwardo bowed, but the young lady knew little about the cool formalities of society, and frankly took his hand and pressed it, and then turned toward Bueno and shook his hand with cordiality, yet with seeming dread, for she had never before seen a black person!

Entering the house, Hill and his wife came in and greeted them warmly, and after a few moments' conversation, Mordaunt told Bueno to carry the things he had brought into the kitchen. In a short time that worthy and Mrs. Hill were the best of friends, around the kitchen fire, Bueno assisting her in preparing breakfast, while Hill and his daughter entertained their guests in the middle room, which was designated "the parlor."

At first Edwardo was surprised and pained at seeing May greet Frank so cordially, but then, remembering that when he had last seen her she was only a girl of twelve, and appreciating her lonely and unsophisticated life, he now realized that it was the act of a girl totally ignorant of the ways of the world.

Soon Bueno summoned all to breakfast, and a happy breakfast it was, there in that rude hut in the Casco Bay island home.

An hour after breakfast the guests took their leave, after promising to pass the nights at the hut while they remained upon the island, and descending to the basin, Mordaunt went on board the schooner and commenced preparations for arming and equipping the staunch and capacious vessel.

Calling the men together, Mordaunt told them what they already suspected if they did not already fully know—that he was going to arm and equip the schooner, and that she had been commissioned as a privateer against the enemies of Cuba; also, that he and his officers all bore commissions signed by President Céspedes and approved by the Junta of New York; and that as soon as his vessel was armed and ready for sea he would set sail for the Gulf of Mexico.

And further, he informed them that this expedition was one of unquestioned

peril and no child's play. "Death hangs over our heads in two ways," he told them, "in battle and by the garote, so I wish no cowardly hearts to accompany me. I know that I can depend upon my officers, for most of them I have seen tried; they will stand by me and our glorious cause to the end, be that what it may. Men, shall you, too, all stand by me, and in our beautiful vessel shall we sink or swim together?"

For answer to this stirring appeal loud cheers echoed and re-echoed through the rocky basin. Each and every one of the crew were enthusiastic in praise of their youthful commander and in vows of constancy to his cause.

Mordaunt then proceeded to appoint his officers to their respective ranks, making Edwardo his first lieutenant.

The schooner was unloaded, and the work of arming and equipping begun, and in a week's time the vessel was a formidable antagonist, carrying a crew of sixty stalwarts and three pivot guns.

At length all arrangements for sailing having been made, and giving orders to be ready to leave the basin shortly after nightfall, the young commander wended his way up the path toward the hut, intending to take final leave of his island friends.

May, having been reproved by her mother for her ardent greeting of Frank, had become rather shy of him, and the two had not frequently met since the young officer's arrival on the island.

Now, as he glanced toward the summit of the hill it was to discover the Island Queen standing on the edge of the precipice, looking out upon the ocean.

It had been a favorite resort of theirs seven years before, and he at once sprang up the steep hillside and joined her.

"May, it is now sundown, and soon I must put to sea."

"I know it, Frank, and it makes me unhappy. Why will you not stay here? Let the others go, let Edwardo command the schooner, and you live here with us," and the girl's pleading look and innocent face touched Mordaunt to the heart.

"Poor little innocent!" he said gently; "how little you know about the world! And yet, I would not have you know more of its evils, its cares, and its ways. It has been a good and yet a cruel world to me, but I am strong to take things as they come, while you, wholly unversed in all things, would pine away and die anywhere but here."

"Oh, Frank! Why go away at all? Why not stay here?"

"I cannot, May, for I owe allegiance to my adopted country. Duty, honor, ambition, all compel me to act. I have embarked in an undertaking which I must carry out or lose my life in the attempt, and besides, far away from here in my Southern home I have some one who loves me."

"I love you, Frank!" and the words were uttered as with irrepressible passionateness.

"Yes, as a brother, May; but not as Inez does, for she is my promised wife."

"Your promised wife?"

The words were spoken slowly, but with such deep feeling that Frank could no longer disguise from himself that the beautiful islander was in love with him beyond power of her own control.

Love and jealousy come naturally; they do not have to be taught; and the untutored girl felt in her heart that she loved the man before her, and equally that she hated the woman who stood between her and her love!

Mordaunt watched her face as it flushed and paled with her emotion, and felt a severe pang that he was innocently the cause of her sorrow. Taking her hand, he said softly:

"May, now I must bid you good-by. One of these days I hope to come back to see you, and then I will bring you books to read and other things that will make you comfortable and happy in your lonely home, for your father tells me he will never leave it."

"Don't leave me, Frank!" came in pleading accents, as the Island Queen threw herself into Mordaunt's arms.

"I must, May; and now, good-by!" and he pressed a kiss upon the lips so near his own, and disengaging himself from her embrace, begged the girl to go down to the hut with him and bid adieu to his friends.

The tearful face was raised to his; the little brown hand dashed the pearly drops from her eyes, and without further protest, she turned and accompanied him to the cabin.

Mordaunt and his officers soon bade adieu to their friends, and as Frank held out his hand to May, it was grasped with a nervous manner, and he saw in her eyes the still burning fervor of her love.

Soon they were all on board; the sails were let fall; the bow of the schooner was hauled round, and she was towed to the mouth of the basin, where the wind striking her, the sails filled, and with a loud cheer from her crew, the Hornet bent to the breeze and rapidly flew seaward.

In an hour the island and its strange inhabitants were far astern.

CHAPTER VIII.

CUBA LIBRE! THE CRUISER'S FIRST CRUISE.

Preparations had been made on board the Hornet to hoist the Lone Star Flag of the Cuban Patriots just at sunrise and to salute it with twenty-one guns, as its folds were thrown for the first time upon the ocean.*

Accordingly, just as the eastern sky grew crimson with the rising of the sun, Edwardo ran up the Lone Star emblem of Cuba Libre, and the first gun in its honor rang out over the waters, startling the quiet fishermen who were in sight, plying their vocation."

As each gun pealed forth its welcome to the new-born flag, cheer after cheer mingled with the boom! boom! of the cannon, and were borne far away over the sea.

As the schooner bounded along, with her immense spread of canvas catching every puff of wind, Mordaunt and his officers felt that they could fully trust their vessel, and that few of the old Spanish ships could overtake them.

Captain Mordaunt had received head-quarter orders to put in close to the port of New York as he passed south, as the Junta wished to send an officer into Cuba with dispatches for Céspedes; therefore, as the Hornet approached New York all hands were on the lookout for some vessel that would signal them.

One lovely moonlight night while sailing quietly along, the dark hull of a large vessel was seen almost dead ahead of them, while just off the port bow another vessel loomed up.

"Those are war vessels, Edwardo," said Mordaunt, who had been looking at them through his glass, "and both are standing toward us about three hundred yards apart."

Edwardo took the glass, glanced through it, and exclaimed:

"Yes, by St. George, and vessels of the Spanish navy, too! I once was an officer on the one on our port bow, and ought to know her. Shall we put about, Captain?" and the young Cuban's voice betrayed no tremor of anxiety.

"No! Helmsman, keep her off half a point, and then keep her steady. Edwardo, put her under more sail, and let us go rapidly by those fellows, for I do not like their looks."

Captain Mordaunt gazed intently through his glass at the approaching ships, both of which were steering the same course, and in a few moments would pass him, on either side.

Edwardo gave orders to set the top-sails, and main jib.

Under this additional canvas the Hornet almost doubled her rate of speed, and in a few moments was in hailing distance of the two war steamers.

*A fact. It was the Hornet that first ran up and saluted the Lone Star Flag.

"Keep her steady, there!" was the Captain's matter-of-fact order.

"Ay, ay, Sir," was the answer; "steady it is!"

Then seizing his silver speaking trumpet, Mordaunt stood ready to answer the hail, sure to come.

"Schooner, ahoy!" it soon came.

"Ahoy!" answered the clear voice of the Hornet's commander.

"What schooner is that?"

"The yacht Hornet, bound into New York."

"Where from?"

"Egypt. What vessel is that?" asked Mordaunt in return.

"The Spanish man-of-war Onadried," and before any more questions could be asked or answered, the two vessels were too far apart for voice to be heard.

"Well, we went into the lion's den that time, Ed, and we were lucky to escape. I was afraid our guns would excite their curiosity," said Mordaunt, handing his glass and speaking trumpet to Bueno.

"Tug boat ahead, Sir, with 'blue, white and blue' signal set," announced a seaman, coming aft.

"Yes, I see her; they are our signals. Show our lights, Sir, blue, white and blue," and the three lanterns were at once run up to the mast head.

In twenty minutes a small tugboat came within hailing distance, and the cutter of the Hornet was sent to board her.

A gentleman got into the small boat, and was soon put on board the cruiser. He was met by Mordaunt and greeted as General Modino.

Descending into the cabin with the visitor, Mordaunt remained a few minutes, and returning sent a bundle of dispatches back to the tugboat. When the cutter returned the cruiser captain called to Edwardo and told him to put the schooner on her course for Cuba.

He then continued: "Edwardo, the General is to be our guest to Cuba. The Junta desire me to land him on the coast in a place where he can easily reach the Patriot forces, and he tells me the coast near where you live is about the best locality. What think you?"

"My knowledge of the coast is perfect, Frank, but if we land him there, is he well enough acquainted with the country to ride thirty or forty miles to join our army?"

"No; he says he is not, and that is what I am coming to. I have thought that it would be a good idea, to put in to the cove near Buena Vista and land just after dark; then I can go with the General up to the house, secure horses, and ride with him to the army of Cespedes, and can return the following night.

"In the meantime you can take command, and after we land, can put to sea again and come back for me the following night. How do you like that plan?"

"It is a good one, but I think you risk too much, Frank. It is a great hazard for you to take a horseback ride like that, inland."

"Risk nothing, gain nothing, my dear boy, and I particularly wish to see Cespedes. I can, you know, inform your mother and sister of my destination, and have them go down to the coast to meet you when you come in, the second night, after me."

Thus it was arranged, and the cruiser, as if feeling the joy that was in the hearts of some on board at once more seeing their native land and those they loved, flew along with increased speed over the moonlit waves.

CHAPTER IX.

HOME AGAIN AND THE PATRIOT CAMP.

"Will you attempt to run in to-night, Frank?"

"Certainly. It is a fearful night, but there is more safety from the enemy on account of the danger from the elements, and I think we know the channel well enough."

"Of that there is no doubt. I'll take in all sail except what is absolutely

necessary, and will then tie myself in the rigging forward."

"And I will take the helm. Carry your speaking trumpet with you, Edwardo."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and Eduardo Valiente went forward to make arrangements for running the Hornet into the harbor near Bueno Vista.

It was indeed a fearful night, and the little vessel was struggling with the waves that dashed around and threatened to engulf her.

It was after a clear run from off New York, and the cruiser had arrived off the coast of Cuba just as darkness came on. It was a tempestuous night and a high sea to fight, but the stanch schooner, with her stanch officers and crew was headed for the land, which could be indistinctly seen about a mile and a half ahead.

"Port!"

The order came in a hoarse voice from forward, where Edwardo was now tied to the rigging, and the clean tenor-like tones of Mordaunt answered, as he obeyed the order.

"Port it is!"

"Port again!"

"Port it is!"

And the obedient vessel came around beautifully under her helm, like a thing of life.

The crew were all at quarters, and perfect silence reigned on board, every one knowing the danger that was even then upon them.

Holding on to the pivot gun aft, was the general, who, though accustomed to tumults on land, was very little satisfied with this display upon the ocean, but he had to admire the cool courage and admirable skill with which the Hornet was managed.

"Hard! hard a starboard!" came in sharp tones from Edwardo, but the even voice of Frank returned:

"Hard a starboard it is!"

"Steady, as she is!"

"Steady it is."

And as the tempest-tossed cruiser bounded for a short while on this course each wave became less tumultuous; the low land grew higher; and dimly traced in the distance could be seen the point of rocks where, months before, Mordaunt and Edwardo had said farewell to Inez and Nita.

Then it was a quiet moonlight night, and all nature was beautiful; now the vicious winds swept around the rocky point, and earth, sea and sky were dark with the storm clouds of a tropic gale.

"Hard down your helm!" came from Edwardo; and, as the order was obeyed, the schooner swung round a reef of rocks where the waves were dashing in wild fury.

A moment more and the gallant craft was in comparatively still water in the little cove!

Half an hour later Mordaunt, Edwardo and the general stood on the land—a land where they well knew prices were set upon their heads!

"It is such a miserable night, Edwardo, I dislike to have you go out again, but then, it is best, for were you to remain in the cove to-morrow, although there is no danger of any Spanish vessels being along after this blow, your presence here would be reported, and the planters around would all have to suffer for it, for the Spaniards would then pour in here, in force," assumed Mordaunt.

"I agree with you, Frank, and though there is danger in our going out, you yourself will risk far more by remaining on land. You know the nearest path up to Bueno Vista. Go and tap at mother's window. She will hear you, and will have horses for you and the general."

"You can trust old Jacko, for he was father's body servant. Do not tell mother that I have gone out to sea again to-night, for it would only distress her. Merely say that I will be in to-morrow night, and let them be in readiness to come down with you, as you return."

"Now, good-by, and do try and not

risk yourself. Good-by general! I hope we'll meet again under better circumstances!" and the friends parted, Edwardo to return to the cruiser and put out to sea again, while Mordaunt and the general drew their cloaks around them and turning into a narrow path, rapidly ascended the hill.

After half an hour's walk they came in sight of the stately mansion of the Valientes, and going around to the west wing, where a light was burning, for it was not late, Mordaunt struck two slight taps upon the blind.

The light flickered inside; then the sash was gently raised and a voice asked "Who is there?"

"Frank Mordaunt! Can I come in?"

A suppressed cry of joy was heard inside the room, and a hasty "Come round to the side door," and Mordaunt and the general obeying, found themselves in the presence of Senora Valiente and Inez.

"Where, where is my poor boy?" asked the mother, her face pale with dread.

"Safe and well, madam, I am happy to say!"

"Thank Heaven for this news you bring me! I had feared such dreadful things!" and the mother seemed overcome with joy, while Inez, who had sprung forward to meet Frank greeted him most lovingly.

Captain Mordaunt then presented his friend, and made known his wishes.

"I will at once call Jacko, and the best horses shall be ordered for you," said Senora Valiente, leaving the room, while Inez, not retiring to call the servants, prepared and set before Mordaunt and the general a tempting repast.

While they ate Frank told the mother and daughter of their adventures, leaving out, however, a description of the beauty of May Hill, the fisherman's daughter.

In less than an hour the horses were ready, concealed in a wood near the house, and with sad hearts, Inez and her mother bade farewell to the two Patriots and saw them depart on their perilous journey, but promised to be in readiness for Frank's return the following night.

"Ah, Jacko! I am glad to see you," and Mordaunt clasped the brawny hand of the faithful negro.

"I'm glad to see you again, Massa Mordaunt; drefful glad. I heard you had gone to America, and we darkies been hoping you'd get the President-General to stop all this fighting here," and Jacko held Mordaunt's stirrup for him to mount.

"You can make the trip to the army easy, Massa Frank. It is only twenty-five miles, and these horses will carry you like steam!" assured the negro.

"Now, Jacko, you must look after the ladies, and to-morrow night I will see you again," and bidding the devoted servant good night, Mordaunt and the general gave reins to their horses and rode off at a rapid gallop.

Over hills and across valleys the two urged their horses, and at last, upon ascending an eminence, beheld below the camp fires of the Patriot forces—a sight at which their hearts rejoiced.

"Halt! Who comes there?" and the clear challenge in the Spanish language brought the two men to a sudden stop.

"Friends, who wish to see Senor Cespedes!" answered Mordaunt in Spanish, which language he spoke perfectly.

"Dismount! Advance and give the countersign, friends!" was the order from the unseen challenger.

"We have no countersign. Call for an officer and have us taken to the general commanding," returned Mordaunt, peremptorily.

In a moment more the sentinel called out to them to advance, and obeying, they found themselves surrounded by half a dozen wild-looking soldiers, who hurried them off to the headquarters of their general.

It was not yet daylight, and as Mordaunt was to remain the next day in the camp he was averse to disturbing the general commanding, but his companion thought the contrary, and accordingly

they were conducted, by their guard, toward a small house, through the windows of which a light could be seen.

A sentinel at the door challenged the party, but the officer in charge went forward, gave the countersign and entered the house, when, after remaining a few moments, he came out and requested the general and Mordaunt to follow him.

Being ushered into a large room on one side of a narrow hallway, Mordaunt and his companion saw seated around a table, in earnest conversation, three officers, clad in the simple patriot uniform.

Seeing them enter, the officers glanced up, and one of them, recognizing Mordaunt's companion, called him by name and gave him a cordial welcome, at the same time introducing him to President Cespedes and General Jordan, who were the two others seated at the table.

Both greeted him cordially, and he then turned to Frank, saying: "President Cespedes, allow me to present to you Captain Mordaunt, the commander of the Cuban privateer *Hornet*; General Jordan, Captain Mordaunt, General Quesada, my friend Captain Mordaunt."

The President and the two generals all grasped the cruiser captain's hand warmly, and could not help showing their admiration as they gazed into his handsome, courageous face.

Seats were placed at the table for the newcomers, and in a short while all were deep in the plans of the patriots for their future movements.

Daylight broke at length, and the sun rose and dispelled the storm clouds of the night before; still that party sat around the table engaged in conversation. At length Cespedes rose and said:

"Gentlemen, I fear you think me an indifferent host, but the fact is we had much to do, and your coming so delighted me that I forgot you needed rest and refreshments. Now, let us go to breakfast," and entering another room the party sat down to a substantial repast.

After the meal, Mordaunt went to see if the horses had been well attended to, and observing his companion of the night before approaching, Frank called out to him:

"General, I forgot to tell you last night that Senorita Valiente desired me to say that you must keep the horse you rode as a present from her, for it is one of her favorites."

"She has conferred upon me a very great favor, Mordaunt, and I wish you to express to her my appreciation of her gift, and tell her that I shall always care for her favorite as tenderly as if he were in her hands. But come; I was sent to look you up. The President is going to ride around the lines, and wishes you to accompany him. Jordan and Quesada are also going," and the two friends—for they had become strongly attached to each other—re-entered the house.

The day passed pleasantly in camp rounds, and toward evening Cespedes and his officers were again assembled in council.

Mordaunt was present, but was prepared for his return to the coast; and now, having received a bundle of dispatches from the President, and a package of letters to be mailed at the first port which the *Hornet* entered, the cruiser captain arose to start upon his journey.

Grasping his hand, Cespedes said to him:

"Captain Mordaunt, you have shown yourself an able and daring officer, and heaven grant you meet with success through life, and live to see the flag of the Republic of Cuba floating over this land, in whose defense you already have done, and will yet do, so much.

"I dislike to have you go unattended, and you had better let me send an escort of cavalry with you; the general here will command it, as he seems anxious to get back to the coast, where he saw those lovely dark eyes last night. They seem to have bewitched him. You will command the squadron, general, will you not?" and the party joined in the laugh against him, for he had in-

formed each one individually of the remarkable beauty of Inez, and of her present of her horse to him.

"Indeed, I will, Senor," quickly assented the officer; but Frank interrupted, for he did not want his friends to risk danger on his account, and another reason was that he was not so anxious for the general to see again "the dark eyes" which had made such an impression on him at first sight; so he said:

"No, general, I would be safer alone. A squad of cavalry would attract attention going through the country, and it might compromise the planters on the route.

"I have a good horse, and can make the distance in three hours. It is dark now, and I must be on my way. So good-by, and success attend you all!"

With hearty handshakes with his associates in arms, Frank mounted his horse, which evidently was anxious to be again on the road for home; and as darkness had now come on he rode from the patriot camp and turned toward the coast.

CHAPTER X.

THE MIDNIGHT RIDE.

Urging his horse into a gallop, after having passed the last sentinel, Mordaunt continued on for some miles without drawing rein; and, filled with happy thoughts of his anticipated return to Inez, and rejoiced at again seeing Nita, whom he loved as a sister, he was almost oblivious to his lonely and dangerous position, when suddenly he was brought down to a stern reality of it by seeing a light flash and hearing the report of a pistol just in front of him.

To draw his own pistol, take his reins well in hand and check his horse, was his instantaneous act, and seeing two forms on horseback about thirty paces from him, he called out:

"Stand aside or I fire!"

Another bullet whirled past his head in answer, while a voice called out in Spanish:

"Surrender, Senor, or you shall be shot down!"

"Never!" and as he pronounced the word Mordaunt drove his spurs deep into the sides of his horse, which bounded forward toward the horsemen who barred his way.

Three pistol shots rang out in quick succession; a heavy fall and a groan told that one had found its mark, and the firm demand from the cruiser captain to his remaining antagonist proved that he was not hurt:

"Surrender, Sir Spaniard, or you die!" and the sailor officer seized the bridle of his foe and presented his pistol to his head.

"Do not kill me!" and the Spaniard held out his sword to Mordaunt.

Taking the weapon, Frank ordered his prisoner to dismount, and seeing that he was an officer, he said to him:

"Why did you bar my way, Senor? I was not disturbing you."

"You are Captain Mordaunt of the pirate schooner *Hornet*. I learned as much from a deserter from the rebel camp, and that you would come this way; so I sent at once for men to capture you, but fearing you would pass before they came, I urged Colonel Muerda here—poor fellow, you have finished him—to come with me and capture you," answered the Spaniard, who was a fine-looking fellow, dressed in the uniform of a major of cavalry.

"And I have turned the tables upon you, Senor, it seems. Well, I am now like the man who bought the elephant; I do not know what to do with you."

"If a suggestion from myself would be allowed, I would say release me," the Spaniard returned, with a smile.

"I'll do it on one condition, Senor, and that is that you await your men here and refuse to allow them to follow me for three hours. By that time I will be out of your road."

"I know, Captain Mordaunt, that your schooner is lying hidden in some harbor on the coast, but where she rides, I con-

fess I do not know, but if I lose the opportunity to take you I lose a great deal."

"Yes, you lose your life, for, by heaven, unless you promise me upon your honor as an officer that you will not permit me to be followed for three hours, I swear I will shoot you dead, as you stand here!" and that the privateer captain meant what he said the Spaniard felt assured both by his determined voice, and by the set manner of his face, as indistinctly he could see it in the darkness.

"My men may not be here for two hours yet," assured the Spaniard.

"It matters not when they come. If they come up this moment you should die! Look here!" and Mordaunt unfastened from his sword belt his naval cap and placed it on his head; then he threw the slouch hat he had worn to the ground; also he cast aside his cloak and so appeared in the handsome uniform of a captain in the Cuban patriot navy.

"Look, Senor!" he repeated, "am I a man to trifle when I wear here in the heart of Cuba this proscribed uniform? Do you think I would allow your life, or a dozen lives, to stand between my own and the duties I have to perform?"

"No! Though I dislike to take a fellow creature's blood upon my hands, and stain them with a stain that will never wear off, and now deeply regret the death of that poor man lying there, still you shall die unless you promise to keep your men from my track!"

"I am risking my life upon your word."

Mordaunt had spoken almost fiercely, and the now well-scared officer hastened to give the required promise.

"Thanks, Senor! a thousand thanks; for you have saved life and kept me from doing an act which would have haunted me to my dying day. My name is Frank Mordaunt; I am an American in the Cuban service. We fight under different flags, but may one day meet again under different circumstances. Now I must leave you, and I regret the sad task you have in watching by the dead body of your friend. I need not remind you of your promise. Good night!"

"Hold, Senor! You have been very generous toward me, and I wish to have you think better of me than my conduct has proved. My friend, Colonel Muerda, and myself were poorly armed, and when I surrendered to you I had no shot left. This sword you see is meant for show, not service.

"I have found you a gentlemen and a brave man, and, as you say, I hope to meet you again. My name is Guiore Aldano, major of the —th Spanish cavalry, and if the fortunes of war go against you, and you ever fall into Spanish hands, and we are seldom merciful, you know, call on me and I will aid you all in my power. Now, good night."

The Spaniard held forth his hand, which was courteously grasped by Mordaunt, who then rode away musing over the strange and most moving incidents which war will bring about.

Knowing that he had no time to lose, though not for one moment did he doubt the Spaniard's word, but fearing that he might be attacked from some other direction, Mordaunt rode rapidly on until he found that his horse was becoming winded.

Worried by this and cogitating what to do, he remembered that there lived not far from the spot where he then was an old planter who was noted for keeping fine horses, though he lived in a miserable cabin and was continually pleading poverty.

"The old miser sympathizes with Spain in this struggle, that I pretty well know; but I'll levy a patriot tax on him and take his best horse," was Mordaunt's decision, and he turned into the by-road leading to the old plantation buildings.

As he approached the cabin he saw a light in the window, and through the open chinks of the dilapidated walls could see forms moving about inside, so,

dismounting, he tied his horse to a tree and crept up to the dwelling and peeped through the openings.

Seated at a table Mordaunt saw the old miser, and next to him an officer in the uniform of a captain in the Spanish army, while two others were seated near, also dressed in uniform.

Leaning against the side-board, trying to draw the cork from a bottle of wine, Mordaunt was startled to recognize the evil face of Carlos Aguiá!

"So that villain is here, in Cuba again! and that means no good for me and mine, that is sure. By the way, Carlos is noted for having the swiftest and best horse in the country. I wonder, has he ridden him here, and is the steed now in the stable?"

"I'll soon know, and if yes, then I'll swap horses! They are evidently going to remain all night, for they love drink too much to leave those half dozen bottles of wine on the side-board unopened. I'll fix him."

Thus musing, the cruiser captain went back to where he had tied his horse, unfastened him and led him by a circuitous path toward the stables.

Having often been upon the premises he was well acquainted with the grounds and the habits of the people, and felt assured that he would not arouse any one if he acted quickly and with due caution.

The door of the stable was unfastened, and almost noiselessly Mordaunt entered, leaving his tired horse outside. But he could do nothing in the dark, so he said to himself:

"I'll risk it."

He lit a match, and by its light saw the coveted steed of Aguiá tied in a stall as he presumed he would be.

In a few moments the saddle and bridle were put on him that was just to his wish; so mounting the steed he led him outside.

Immediately he acted. His saddle and bridle were removed and placed on Aguiá's horse, and hitching them together he proceeded toward the house, saying:

"The temptation is too great. I must give him an idea of how near he came to losing his life!" Taking from his pocket his notebook with its pencil, he placed it against the side of the house in such a manner as to let the light from the window fall upon it, and wrote as follows:

"Carlos Aguiá:

"Senor: Being in a hurry to return to my vessel, which floats the Cuban flag, I have borrowed your favorite horse Star, for my ride, knowing that he will serve me as well as he has done his master, who is a traitor to the land of his nativity.

"FRANK MORDAUNT,

"Commander of Cuban cruiser Hornet."

"Oh, how he will swear when he reads this!" thought Frank, as he tore the leaf from the book and pinned it upon the front door, retraced his steps toward his horses, and at once mounting the noble steed he felt once more safe, as, turning his horse outside the gate, he started again upon his way.

He rejoiced to see that the short rest which his own horse had had and the relief of his weight had so much recuperated the beast that he galloped easily along.

Half a mile passed, until at length Mordaunt felt the salt sea air in his face, and soon after came to the large white gateway leading into the plantation of Bueno Vista.

Inez's horse had well kept up, and with a sigh of relief Frank turned in through the gate and dashed on up the long avenue toward the house.

"Is that you, Massa?" called out the vigilant Jacko, who seemed to have slept out on the grounds.

"Yes, Jacko. Is all right at the house?"

"All right, sir. Miss Inez told me to meet you here and then let her know, and she and missus and Miss Nita and her father will come here and join you,

for they do not want the servants to see you," said Jacko.

"Just as well, Jacko; I'll hold the horses here, and when you come back put Miss Inez's horse in the stable, and the other one strip off his saddle and bridle and turn out of the gate. He'll go home, I guess."

"Why, this is Star! It's Carlos Aguiá's horse, Massa Frank!" exclaimed the old negro, with surprise.

"Yes, I borrowed him. My horse became blowed, and I went to old Beata's to get another, when I saw Carlos through the cracks drinking with the old man and two or three other Spanish officers, so I took Aguiá's horse, and he brought me along swiftly," Mordaunt explained, laughing at the trick he had played his enemy.

"None better, Massa Frank; Star's a good horse; pity his owner wasn't like him. But what a brave fellow you is, to be sure! I declare you beats 'em all. Now I'se going to the house."

Old Jacko started off, but in a few moments returned and took the horses.

"Has the yacht come, Jacko?" asked Frank.

"Yes, sir, she come in about two hours ago. It is now about one o'clock."

In a few moments Mordaunt was joined by the party from the house, and warm greetings were exchanged.

On their way to the beach Frank told them of his trip to the patriot camp, and of his adventures by the road. All enjoyed exceedingly the joke played upon Carlos Aguiá, and Frank then learned for a certainty what he had suspected—that he was employed as a Spanish spy, and had been sent to New York to watch the movements of Edwardo and himself.

"Where is DeVega now, Senor Gonzalez?" asked Frank, when he had heard all about Aguiá.

"Why, bless you, my boy, he is a Spanish officer of volunteers, and spends his time between Havana and New York. If you meet him, beware of him," said the old gentleman.

"I have met him, and in New York," and he went on to tell of the circumstances of his meeting DeVega, and the manner in which he had gotten away from him the evening he sailed from New York.

By this time the party had arrived upon the beach, and seeing the Hornet lying at anchor in the cove, Mordaunt took out a match and lighted it as a signal for the boat to come ashore.

It was quickly answered by a like signal from the yacht, and a short while after the cutter landed and Edwardo sprung upon the beach.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLOODY NIGHT'S WORK.

After the greeting was over and Edwardo had congratulated Mordaunt upon his safe return, the latter said:

"We will all go on board the Hornet, for we have two hours to spare. Edwardo, send the boat back, under the charge of Rudolph and Estevan, for Senor Valiente has let their families know that they could see them by coming down to the beach, and I expect them every moment."

The party were soon on board the vessel; then the cutter returned to the shore under the charge of the two Cuban officers, and a short time later came alongside again, crowded with the friends of the young officers.

All the party were well acquainted with each other, and it was a joyous meeting in the cabin of the trim privateer.

Thus the moments made up hours, and at last the moment came for the party to go on shore, so that the vessel might get well out to sea by daybreak.

Three boats were ordered in readiness, and the guests all placed safely in them, Mordaunt, Edwardo, Rudolph and Estevan accompanying them ashore.

Then came the sad parting, and as the last word of love was being said, a bright flash of flame lit up the scene,

and fifty muskets pealed forth upon the still mountain air!

Senor Gonzales fell dead, shot through the heart, and the mother of Rudolph and the fair young wife of Estevan sank to the earth to rise no more.

Poor old Jacko also lay down to die, with the blood streaming from his side. An instant only of silence reigned, after that cruel volley of musketry; then the commanding tones of Mordaunt's voice rang out:

"To the boats, men! Back, you Spanish murderers! Here is your game. Do not fire on women, you brutes!" and then, as he retreated slowly to his boats he called out gently.

"Inez, Nita, are you hurt?"

"No; mother, Nita and myself are safe, but poor Senor Gonzalez has fallen. But go! please go, Frank, or you will be killed," and Senorita Valiente and Nita joined in the entreaty.

"Yes, I am going. None of us are hurt; but for this night's work Spanish blood shall flow!"

And with pistol in hand, Mordaunt and his party retreated slowly toward their boats, expecting every moment to be fired upon by the Spaniards, who were slowly moving from the hill above toward the beach.

"Schooner, ahoy!" suddenly called out Mordaunt, in a loud voice.

"Ahoy!" came the answer from Lieutenant Duke, on the Hornet.

"Train your gun upon that large tree just below the point of rocks and fire."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and in a moment, as it were, the heavy boom of the gun followed, the iron shell rushed shrieking through the air, and striking near the spot aimed at, burst with a loud report in the midst of the ambushed Spaniards!

"Well done, my noble Duke! Give it to them again!" cried Mordaunt, and, as a second report came from the schooner's deck, the small party reached their boats, and springing into them shoved off, and with steady strokes rapidly neared the vessel, while the young captain and Edwardo stood up in the stern and gazed anxiously toward the little group upon the shore.

Seeing that the party in the boat were safe, Senor Rudolph conducted the crowd of weeping women back from the beach, and putting them under shelter from the firing returned with his son, a boy of sixteen, and a faithful negro who had accompanied him from home, to get the bodies of his wife, Ella Estavan, Senor Gonzalez and Jacko.

These were soon conveyed behind the hill, where he had left his little party; and then, determined that the Spaniards should not escape the fire from the schooner on their account, Senor Rudolph hailed the vessel.

"We are all safe behind this hill; fire on the inhuman fiends! There are about fifty of them!"

A loud cheer answered from the schooner, proving that he had been understood, and the boats having reached the vessel the cannon's sharp crack and roar again woke the stillness. It was answered by a feeble volley from the Spanish soldiery, who had not yet left their retreat among the rocks.

"Fifty of them are there; then I'll diminish their number. Edwardo, take command and keep up a hot fire from all of the guns upon their ambush, and Duke and Herbert, you take your crews in the second and third cutters, and I will take the first cutter with a dozen men. We cannot leave here until blood is shed on both sides," and in an instant the men were crowding into the small boats.

"Have all in readiness to sail, Edwardo, and keep up your firing until we get under the hill; then, if we go under, put to sea and get you another crew!"

Captain Mordaunt spoke calmly, but his officers and crew knew that the tiger in him was now aroused, and that no Spaniard need look for mercy at his hands.

"Shove off! Duke, come after me; Herbert, follow in the wake of Duke's boat."

With great speed the boats were urged shoreward, while the guns of the cruiser almost kept time to the beat of the oars.

From the darkness of the night and the smoke of the guns the Spaniards had not noticed the small boats leaving the schooner, so they still kept up a straggling fire, though their shots fell short.

"By all the stars! that dare-devil Mordaunt is landing!" suddenly cried Senor Rudolph, who had been watching the firing with interest, and who discovered a mass of hurrying men making for the unsuspecting Spaniards.

The interest in the fate of the living had prevented the sorrowing group from thinking much about the dead in their midst, and of their own sorrows, and with prayers for the safety of those on the schooner they had watched the return of the boat and the flashes of the guns; but now Senor Rudolph's remark caused them new anxiety, and as he continued:

"This will be bloody work now," all felt a fearful conflict would be the result of Mordaunt's daring undertaking, and in an agony of suspense they almost held their breath and waited.

The firing from the schooner ceased, and as the Spaniards strained their eyes to see the cause, almost upon them came the loud command:

"At them, men! at them! Show no one mercy! No quarter now!"

Then came the clash of swords, the reports of pistols and the shouts of combatants mingling in bloody strife; but above the din of combat the commanding, yet steady, tones of Mordaunt could be heard cheering his men, and as Inez listened to them they sent a thrill of joy through her—of pride that the dauntless Mordaunt possessed her love.

Ah! woman; incomprehensible at all times, but far more so where pride, passion and love are aroused together!

Even then Inez rejoiced that her love was there in that carnage, striking a blow for her bleeding country, and his the master hand that was leading that little band on to victory, and whose voice was urging men to die rather than give one inch to their hated foe!

How breathlessly that little group watched that struggle! and how all wept with joy when the patriot cry of victory was heard! That they thanked heaven for granting that victory is needless to state.

Yes, the ringing cheer of the patriots proclaimed their victory, and the chorus was swelled by the answering cheer of Edwardo and his men upon the cruiser.

"Here, Duke, we cannot pursue them! Get together the wounded and make for the boats. But where is Herbert?" asked Mordaunt, wiping his sword and returning it to its scabbard.

"There he is, poor fellow!" answered Duke, pointing to the body of the lieutenant lying near him on the hill.

"Killed? Oh! heavens, no! And yet it is too true," and Frank raised the lifeless hand of his officer to his lips and kissed it. Turning to one of the men he inquired:

"Where is Midshipman Henriquez?"

"He was shot dead, Sir, by my side," answered the seaman, politely touching his hat.

"Muna, poor fellow, gone too? This has indeed been a sad night's work, but I'll reap a fearful harvest of Spanish lives to pay for it!" and giving a few more orders about the wounded, Mordaunt walked over toward the little knoll where he knew the group of grief-stricken Cubans were assembled.

Bueno walked by his side, having followed close to him during the combat, and caused more than one Spaniard to feel the weight of his heavy sword.

"Ah! Senor Rudolph, we have gained a sad victory. Two of my officers and nine men killed, besides half a dozen wounded. This is a heavy loss out of thirty-five that came ashore. The Spaniards numbered over a hundred, but, thank fortune, there were more of them

killed than I had men with me!" said Mordaunt to Senor Rudolph, who, seeing him coming, had gone to meet him.

A sad sight met the gaze of Frank as he joined the party; but the warm congratulations of his friends upon his safety passed unheeded as he knelt beside the form of his old friend who had been as a father to him.

Laying his hand upon the cold forehead of Senor Gonzalez he said:

"I will never have a better friend than you have been, Senor. God knows I have loved you as my own father!"

"Frank, where is brother Edwardo?" asked the sweet voice of Inez, and she laid her little hand upon his shoulder as he knelt by the corpse.

"Forgive me, Inez, dear, for forgetting you in my own grief, and you, Senora. Edwardo is safe on board the schooner. I feared some accident to him, so left him in command on the vessel."

"Thanks, my son!" and the mother could say no more.

"Nita!" and Frank raised the weeping girl, who, now that her lover was safe, began to realize the full loss she had met with in the death of her father, and had thrown herself upon the ground in an agony of grief.

"Nita, my little sister, I must leave you now, but I feel reconciled, for I leave you in the care of Senora Valiente and with Inez. You have been as dear to me as though you were my own true sister. Heaven bless you for it, and grant that we may meet again! I will look after and protect Edwardo all in my power. Now kiss me good-by."

"Oh, Frank! Frank! must I lose all now—father, Edwardo, and you—all in one night?" cried the weeping girl, throwing herself into Mordaunt's arms.

"Be calm, Nita! Here, Senora, will you take her now, for I must be off," and resigning the weeping girl to Senora Valiente, Frank pressed the hands of all his friends, and with a farewell embrace to Inez, turned to depart, when a voice near him said:

"Your pardon, Captain Mordaunt!"

As quick as lightning Frank's hand was on his pistol, for he saw before him an officer, clad in Spanish uniform.

"Hold, Senor, I mean no harm!"

"Ah! it is you, Major Aldano! I warn you I am not to be taken alive!" and Mordaunt stood on the defensive.

"You are safe, captain. I deeply deplore this night's work, and am thankful I was not in it. I arrived only a few moments since, with my troop, attracted by the firing, for my true, honest promise I faithfully kept. I came to say that you must not take your seriously wounded to sea with you. Leave them here, and I promise you they shall be cared for, and no harm come to them. I will also see that these ladies are left unmolested, and if I can, will have the officer who fired on a party of women severely punished."

"Now, go! Leave all in my hands! Hasten to your boats and have the wounded men put on shore. And be speedy, for if you are caught I cannot save you!"

"Thank you, Major Aldano. Your kindness shall be remembered. You have proved yourself a friend, and I leave all in your hands."

A moment after Mordaunt reached the boats, and finding that four of the men were too seriously wounded to carry with him, he had them placed on the beach, and springing into the boat he gave orders to shove off, and soon they were alongside the schooner.

"Have the boats hauled up, Edwardo; and merrily there, men, with that anchor!" called out Mordaunt, as he sprang on deck.

"Where is the crew of this stern gun? Come forward here, and prepare for work, for we must give those Spaniards a parting salute!" and the men sprang to their places with alacrity.

The wounded were carried below, all sail was spread on the cruiser, and as soon as the anchor was up the gallant

Hornet sailed, wing and wing, out of the cove with a strong wind behind her, and hurling back defiance from the heavy gun mounted upon her stern, which sent its iron thunderbolts into the ranks of the Spaniards, who, by that time, had brought up a battery of artillery, and almost as the Hornet's gun was discharged, replied with vigor.

A cheer from the crew of the schooner greeted the Spaniards' fire, and showed how little they cared for it.

As day broke upon the deeds that night had hid from view, the little vessel passed out of the cove into the open sea, and with her Lone Star Flag floating defiantly she turned her prow toward mid-ocean. To those anxiously watching from the shore, she was soon but a tiny white cloud, apparently floating between sea and sky.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPANIARD OF HONOR.

Major Aldano watched Mordaunt until he descended to the boats, and then going to Senora Valiente he said,

"I am an officer of Spain, lady, and intend to serve my country faithfully, so do not consider me a traitor to my flag for allowing the captain of the privateer to escape, for I could have secured him had I so desired. He is a brave, generous man. I shall see that you and your friends remain unmolested. Now I have duties that call me away," and raising his hat he turned away, but, returning, called to Inez and requested the honor of speaking with her a moment.

Though surprised at the request, Inez advanced to the Spaniard, who said:

"Pardon me, Senorita, but I wish to say to you, what I could not say before, your friends. There are on the beach some wounded men, belonging to the privateer, and if they are carried into our lines, upon their recovery they will be executed. If you will allow me, I will send them to your house, where, as they recover, if they do so—and I feel quite sure they will—they can escape. I will report them as in a dying condition."

"You are a noble man, Major Aldano, and I assure you that we will be glad to have them sent to Buena Vista," said Inez, fully appreciating the kindness of the Spaniard.

"And allow me to suggest that you go with your friends to your house, and send the servants after the dead bodies. I will see that no indignities are offered them; and, Senorita, I trust you will command my services in any way that I can aid you or your friends."

Thanking the officer for his kindness, Inez turned from him and told her mother the purport of their conversation, and together the party went up to the Valiente mansion.

The four wounded soldiers were sent by the Major up to Buena Vista, and when Inez visited them she discovered that the Major had spoken truly, that there were hopes of their recovery.

After the battle on the beach, the neighborhood was cast into mourning, and a deeper gloom fell upon all when they thought what might be the fate of the brave crew of the Hornet.

The day after the midnight battle, the remains of the victims were interred in their separate family cemeteries, and packing up the household effects of Senor Gonzales, poor Nita, almost broken-hearted, left the home of her childhood and went to Buena Vista to remain.

A few days after the sad ceremonies were over, Inez and Nita walked out to the point of rocks, and there saw a green plot just below their feet, a long row of new-made graves where slept Cuban and Spaniard side by side.

Upon that ground they had fought and fell, and beneath its sward they would forever lie.

Sad thoughts came over the two young girls, and tears dimmed their eyes as they remembered the scene that had been enacted there and longed for the return of those upon whom they centered all their love.

"Oh! Nita, how long must this cruel war last? How long must we suffer agony at the thought of the danger for those we love?" and leaning against a tree, Inez sobbed aloud.

"Do not give way, Inez, for Frank and Edwardo may yet return to us safe and unharmed."

"The Blessed Virgin grant your prayer, *Senorita*," said a voice near, which startled the two maidens, and glancing up they saw Major Aldano, who continued quickly:

"This is not intentional intrusion, ladies, but since the fight and landing at this point I have orders to keep men here constantly on the watch, and each day I visit this outpost to see that the soldiers are doing their duty."

"Now, I do not know that Captain Mordaunt would attempt another landing, but I believe you are acquainted, in a measure, with his future movements, and not wishing to see the sad scene of the other night enacted over again, I beg that you will send him information that it would be madness for him to come here again."

"I thank you, Major Aldano—from my heart I thank you," and Inez extended her gloved hand, which the Major took and pressed lightly.

"I am no traitor to Spain, ladies, in what I do, but I am a friend to those that befriend and trust me. By the capture of Mordaunt and his crew I would win a high promotion and find much favor in the eyes of my Government."

"To prove that I warn Mordaunt with just cause, look there!" and the Major pointed down the rocky slope to a clump of bushes.

Almost hidden from sight, the maidens saw there three heavy guns mounted, which commanded the entire cove.

"You see I speak the truth."

"I never doubted you, Major Aldano."

"You are indeed our friend," said Inez, with deep feeling.

"Thanks, lady, for the privilege of calling you by that name. When I can aid you I will gladly do so, but for my sake, for his sake and for your own, warn Mordaunt not to come in here again."

And raising his hat, the officer turned away, and mounting his horse, which stood near, he was soon lost to sight.

Inez and Nita looked again, with dread, upon that masked battery almost beneath their feet, and then, after a long and wistful gaze out upon the ocean, as if they wished for and yet dreaded to see the white sail of the *Hornet*, with sad hearts they turned from the spot and walked home.

Making up their minds that some move must be made to prevent the *Hornet* from again coming into the cove, they determined to see the wounded men, who had been comfortably located in one wing of the building, and endeavor to ascertain from them if they knew a rendezvous where the vessel would be likely to go in the next few weeks.

Entering the long room devoted to the sailors, Inez and Nita inquired regarding their condition, and were glad to see that they were all better—that three of them were so much improved that they hoped to be able to attempt their escape in a week or ten days.

"Do you know any port where Captain Mordaunt intended going within the next month?" asked Nita of one of the men who seemed more intelligent than the others.

"Yes, miss, we intended putting into our supply island in the bay of Barataria, on the Louisiana coast," answered the man.

"When were you going there?" asked Inez.

"Well, we were to be there in three months from the time we sailed, or a little less time, for we were provisioned for ninety days, and I overheard the Captain tell Lieutenant Valiente that a depot had been established there for him on that island, so no doubt they'll soon have a turn with the Spaniards, if they

haven't already had one, and then they'll go there for repairs," explained the sailor.

"You do not think they will have an engagement, do you?" was Inez' trembling question.

"Can't tell, miss. That young captain is a perfect devil, begging pardon, ladies, and he ain't going to let the Spaniards rest after their work the other night. I see'd by his eyes, when he came on board that night after the Spaniards had fired on him ashore, that he was going to do something desperate, and he did."

"And did you see him when he met that Spanish officer who fired a pistol in his face?" asked the seaman lying in the next bed.

"Yes, I did, and I saw by the flash of the pistol that the captain was smiling. Then I pitied that Spaniard, for the sword came down on him, and his carcass was not worth a —, begging your pardon, ladies," and the old sailor's eyes glowed with the remembrance of his young commander's courage.

Each word of their rough praise of their captain went to Inez' heart, and she could but pardon the old tar's speech on account of the admiration he had for his captain and her hero.

"Well, we thank you for your information, and trust you will all soon be well once more," said Inez, encouragingly.

"I'll be ready to get out of this in a week, miss, or I misses my guess!" averred the sturdy sailor.

"Then I will come in and see you again, and will manage some plan by which you can all leave the island and rejoin your ship," and the two girls left the home-hospital, followed by the blessings and admiration of the wounded seamen.

"Inez, I have a plan!" suddenly broke in Nita upon her friend's reverie, as they were seated on the balcony the day after their visit to the point of rocks.

"What is it, friend of mine?"

"You know the old fisherman Bonito, who lives up the coast about ten miles from here?"

"Yes, we all know him very well."

"Well, he has a small fishing smack, and these sailors can go in it across the gulf to the rendezvous, for Bonito will carry them for a small sum of money, I am sure."

"A good idea, Nita. But is not the smack very small?"

"Yes, Inez, it is small, but two Confederate officers crossed in it during the war in the United States. They came to father's plantation and said that they had escaped from a prison ship of some kind, and I remember that Bonito brought the boat, and in it they made their way to the mainland, so why cannot it cross the Gulf again when so much depends upon it?"

"It can be done and it shall be, Nita!" averred Inez, and she and her friend at once went to work to arrange their plans.

Ordering the carriage, they drove up the coast until they came in sight of the little inlet where the fisherman's sloop was lying, and seeing the old man spreading his nets to dry in the sun, they called to him. Discovering who they were, he advanced, hat in hand, to the carriage.

"Bonito, we know that you are a good Patriot, and so we have come to ask if you are willing to risk something for the cause?" informed Nita, as spokesman.

"Indeed, I am, fair lady," responded the old man, with decision.

"Then listen! You are aware that there are four wounded seamen at Buena Vista, who belong to the cruiser *Hornet*? Well, all of them are now getting along so well that they are anxious to return to their vessel, or to a place where they can join her, and we wish you to take them in your sloop. You shall be paid well for your services, you understand."

"I wish no pay, fair lady. I am a poor man, as you know, and it is a risky thing going out of sight of land in such a little craft, but it has crossed the Gulf and can do it again with good luck; so I'll take them; but, lady, if I should not

return, you will not forget my wife and children?"

"No, Bonito, but before you go I will pay into your wife's hands five hundred gold dollars. Maxilio, here," referring to the coachman, "and his brother Pedro are both splendid sailors and will accompany you to aid you in bringing your sloop safely back again, for they have promised me they would."

"Then I am ready, lady Nita, whenever you give me the word to go," and the old fisherman raised his hat as the maidens bade him good-by and returned home.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BRAVERY OF A WOMAN.

Ten days passed after the conversation between the maidens and Bonito, and the four sailors had said they were ready for the start. Knowing the difficulties of communication with the outside world which the Patriot commanders had, Inez determined to send word that she could have dispatches sent out for them by a secret transit over to the United States.

But whom to send to the Patriot camp?

That was a great difficulty, for, though she knew she could trust her coachman, Maxilio, or his brother Pedro, she felt certain they could not make the trip with safety, and if caught they would assuredly be garroted.

For hours she thought the matter over, and at last determined to be her own messenger; so entering Nita's room she told her of her intention.

"Oh! Inez, you cannot do it! Remember, it is nearly thirty miles, and a long, dark and dangerous road!"

"I have thought of all the dangers, Nita, and am determined to go, for I may do the Patriots a great service. General Jordan's camp is near the mountains, and I will make my way there. I will do as Frank did—go one night and return the next."

"Then let me go with you, Inez!" pleaded Nita.

"No; you must remain with mother, and do not let her know where I have gone until some hours after my departure. I will ride Frank's horse, which was brought over from your plantation last week. He is in fine condition and very fleet; so now, Nita, aid me in my preparations."

An hour before sunset Inez ordered her own horse as if for a ride, and he was soon brought to the door by Maxilio, who had saddled Mordaunt's horse for himself.

Inez mounted, and Max, springing into his saddle, followed her. As she rode out from the house her mother called to her not to remain long away, and the poor girl's emotion almost prevented her replying:

"No longer than I can help, mother, dear!"

Nita had not courage to come down to the door to bid good-by, so sat in her window and threw her a kiss of farewell, and burying her face in her hands wept beyond control.

After riding a mile rapidly, Inez called out:

"Maxilio, aid me to dismount and change my saddle to Don."

"Si, *Senorita*!" said Max, to whom Inez had confessed the secret of her intended trip.

The saddles were now changed, and Inez mounted Frank's spirited Don, who arched his neck as if proud of the burden he bore and conscious of the work expected of him.

For about five miles and until dark Max rode just behind Inez' horse; then she called to him: "Now, Max, you go back home, and be certain not to let mother see you ride up alone, for then she will think something has happened to me; but as soon as you get in the house send for Nita and tell her to let mother know where I have gone. I will be back to-morrow night, perhaps before," and leaving the faithful attendant sitting still on his horse, Inez let Don

out into a rapid canter, and for the first time felt the fearful loneliness of her position and the risk she ran. But, true heart that she was, her courage did not falter, and setting her teeth firmly and feeling in her saddle pocket for a small revolver which she had placed there, she rode on determinedly, ready for any fortune which the perilous ride might bring.

Don cared little for the light weight he bore, and with long strides rapidly kicked the miles behind him.

His fair rider would draw rein after each long gallop, and give him a short breathing spell, then would urge him forward again at a galloping gait. The noble beast needed no urging, and four hours had not passed after Inez had left her home when she saw glimmering against the dark sides of the mountains only two miles before her the camp fires of the Cubans!

With joy at her heart, and proud that she had accomplished almost half of her undertaking, the brave young woman dashed on until she came up on a small squad of cavalry patrolling the road.

Astonished at seeing a woman on horseback, the sentinel forgot to challenge her, when she saved him that trouble by saying:

"I am not an enemy, but a friend. Take me before the commanding officer immediately."

A young officer stepped forward and responded:

"General Jordan has just gone on to his quarters, *Senorita*, and I will accompany you there," and, mounting his horse, he rode by her side, and chattered in an easy, off-hand manner in decidedly broken Spanish.

Noticing this, Inez remarked:

"You are not a Cuban, *Senor*?"

"No, I am an American. I came here with General Jordan to fight for Cuba."

"It is noble of you, *Senor*, and I hope Cuba will one day be able to appreciate your services as they deserve. You say you are an American?"

"Yes, a Mississippian, *Senorita*."

"Oh! then perhaps you know a friend of mine from that State, Captain Frank Mordaunt?"

"Frank Mordaunt? Indeed I do know him, and wish I was with him now. I served under him in the Confederate navy, and now hear that he has a vessel in this service."

"Yes, he has, and was on the coast the other night."

"I heard of that affair, *Senorita*, and a gallant thing it was, but just like Frank. It is said he landed from his schooner with forty men and drove three times that number from a strong position. Anyhow," he continued, "the Spaniards admit a large loss, and some prisoners who were taken yesterday by us say the sailors were led by Satan himself in uniform."

"Not very complimentary to Frank, for he is the handsomest man I ever saw."

How these words in her lover's praise pleased Inez; and seeing that her guide was a gentleman, and appreciating his kind manner towards her, she determined to see if she could not have him sent to join Frank, so she said to him:

"If you could get the opportunity to go out and join Frank, I mean Captain Mordaunt, would you go, *Senor*?"

"Would a duck swim? Pardon my American slang, *Senorita*, but it expressed so thoroughly what I felt that I could not help using it. Indeed, I would go anywhere to be with him again."

Inez laughed at his enthusiasm.

"Well, I will see if you cannot be sent. Pardon me, *Senor*, if I ask your name?"

"Westley Dalton, *Senorita*, a staff officer in the army of the Republic of Cuba. But here we are at headquarters. Permit me to assist you!" and the young American, extending his hand, lifted Inez from the saddle.

"Ask General Jordan to be kind enough to come here, sentinel," called out the officer, and addressing Inez he said:

"Pardon me, but by what name can I

introduce you? Or are you acquainted with the General?"

"I have never met him. My name is Inez Valiente."

Obedient to the summons, General Jordan came from his tent, and the officer stepping forward introduced him to his unexpected visitor.

The war-worn General raised his sombrero and invited the young girl into his tent, while Inez asked:

"Can Lieutenant Dalton come also, General?"

"Certainly, *Senorita*," replied the General, and the three entered the tent.

The staff officer, delighted by the compliment paid him by his fair companion, and with the usual vanity of man, at once flattered himself that he had made a decided impression, though when he glanced at his soiled and torn uniform, worn from too much hard service, his pride, like that of the peacock when glancing at his feet, had a fall. But, determining to keep his best side foremost, he backed up against the side of the tent and stood like a soldier on parade.

General Jordan was dressed in gray trousers and top boots and a gray shirt with his insignia of rank on the collar, and wore a broad slouch hat encircled by a gold cord. But in this humble uniform he bowed as gracefully and did the honors of his tattered tent as readily as though he were in the gilded palaces of Spain.

His quiet, decided face lit up by a kindly smile at once gave Inez confidence in him, and she joined in the laugh when he bade her welcome to the commanding General's palatial quarters.

"You see, *Senorita Valiente*, I have no fairy fingers to place things in order here, and make my tent look cheerful, and I think a little needlework would not be amiss, either," and the General glanced towards Dalton, who smiled dismally but never once lost his perpendicular, but continued to face the music.

"You have some communication to make to me, I think you said," continued the General. "But you first need a little rest and refreshments, so I will call my old cook, Maria, and she will look after you while the Lieutenant and myself visit one or two of our new lines of defense," and the Cuban commander bowed low and withdrew, while Dalton followed his example, only going out backwards.

Upon the return of General Jordan and Dalton, Inez told them of her plans, and why she had come to the Patriot camp, and was delighted to know that, at that very time, it was urgent dispatches should be sent to the Cuban agents in New Orleans and elsewhere.

"Also," the General continued, "I had settled upon Lieutenant Dalton as the most competent man to be the bearer of these dispatches, and when he delivers them he certainly has my permission to join Captain Mordaunt, if he has a place for him."

"Now, let me tell you what to do, *Senorita*: It would be next to impossible for a man to ride from here to the coast near your plantation unmolested, and a strong body guard sent with him might defeat our plans, so let the sailors join the fisherman at his house, and tell them to steer for a little bay over a few miles from my camp. There Dalton can join them."

"In the mean time you retire to rest, and to-morrow night you shall have a map of the coast to give the fisherman, and as it would be safer to entrust you with the dispatches, you shall bear them back," and bidding the brave girl good-night the two officers left her in the tent in the charge of old Maria.

As Dalton waited to his quarters to patch his pantaloons and arrange his wardrobe for his trip, he congratulated himself upon being able to be again upon the ocean, under the command of his old friend Mordaunt; and as he threw himself upon his lonely bed that night, bright dreams of lovely eyes and fairy forms floated before his vision, and all took the shape of Inez Valiente!

CHAPTER XIV.

A GALLANT ACT BY A GALLANT ENEMY.

General Jordan stood in front of his tent gazing upon Inez as she rode away upon her return home, the bearer of secret and important dispatches, and mused to himself.

"A brave girl and one to be proud of. Oh! woman, what is it you will not do for those you love, and risk for your country? The fair Inez is certainly in love with some one on board of that vessel, but whether it is Mordaunt or some of the Cuban officers her woman's tact prevented my discovering. And there's that gay fellow Dalton, already in love with her, and she, perceiving that, uses him as a bait, for she knows that the sloop should not sail without some leading mind to command it, and so decided to put the Lieutenant's head into a noose to keep her lover's out of it!" and the General laughed over his apparent discovery. "What fools we men do make of ourselves about women," and with this philosophical remark he re-entered his tent.

Inez was escorted to the last picket line by Westley Dalton; there he was forced to leave her to continue her journey alone. And after receiving his promise that he would faithfully deliver into Frank's hands all the letters which she would give to the fisherman for him, Inez started upon her lonely and perilous ride—just as her hero had done.

It was a lovely night, and the moon gave light enough to enable her to distinguish her lonely road and keep a bright lookout for any danger that might lurk in her path. With heart throbbing violently, and the reins clutched with a firm grasp, her dark eyes peering searchingly ahead, the brave girl rode on, while the timed beat of Don's hoofs told how rapidly she was leaving the Patriot camp far behind.

So the hours passed, one, two, three, and Buena Vista was not then very far away. She began to congratulate herself that the point of rocks would soon be reached. Once there she would be out of danger; then—

There came a report, a flash, and Don, bounding into the air, uttering an almost human shriek, fell dead in the road, throwing Inez to the ground and pinning her there by falling upon her skirt.

Half stunned by the fall, and fearfully frightened, the brave girl raised herself as well as she could, just as half a dozen Spanish soldiers dashed from the woods where they had been concealed, and, dragging the horse off the riding skirt, Inez was rudely aided to arise.

"Back here, men!" and an officer in uniform approached whom, with horror, Inez instantly recognized by the moonlight to be Carlos Aguiá!

With a sinking heart but a firm tone she demanded:

"What means this outrage, *Senor Aguiá*?"

"Fair Inez, I am happy to meet you; but because it has come about somewhat rudely, you call it an outrage," returned Aguiá, with a wicked smile.

"The pleasure is entirely upon your side, *Senor*. I am on my way home. Pray stand aside and allow me to pass."

"Could not think of it, *Senorita*. Your horse is dead, and it is too far for you to walk alone. Besides, I wish you to accompany me."

"You! Never!" and her eyes flashed fire.

"Oh, yes, you will! You have been purposely stopped upon the highway by having your horse shot, and though you term it an outrage, just remember that you are acting in the service of the rebels and are the bearer of secret dispatches, therefore you are a spy and should be taken dead or alive. Your being a woman does not alter in the least; you are a spy. I saw you night before last when you parted with Maxilio on the road, and have hungered myself and lost my rest here in the woods ever since to capture you. It was I who killed your horse, for I shot to kill; otherwise the spy

beast might have taken you beyond reach."

"Now you are my pretty prisoner, and I have, in you, captured a prize which will be valuable to my country in the way of exposing treason, and to myself as a lady-love."

All this was spoken in a low, satirical tone, while Inez looked him steadily in the eye until his last remark, when her face flushed and then paled as she retorted:

"Senor Aguia, you have been received at Buena Vista, and in this neighborhood, as a gentleman and as a friend; you turned traitor to your country, arrayed yourself in arms against your friends, and have now degraded yourself still more by insulting a helpless woman whom you have, by confessed treachery, gotten into your hands. Have you no manhood? Does not your face grow crimson with shame, or is it so stained with guilt that no emotion of a better nature will come upon it?"

"Pretty words, Inez, well put together; but, a truce to compliments now. You are in my power and nothing can save you, for you know that in our war here what we capture we take."

"Yes, I know that the Spanish soldiery, led on by their corrupt officers, burn and pillage the plantations, kill old men and boys and insult women—that they stain their hands in innocent blood and their souls with crime too black to think of—that, led on by drunken and cowardly officers, they flee before the Patriot troops in every engagement, afraid to meet them face to face, brutes and menials that they are!"

"Why, fair Inez, you must have been taking lessons in elocution from that pirate Mordaunt!" and though the wicked smile still lingered upon Aguia's face, he could but show that the resolute girl's words had touched him, for the time had been when they were friends, that he had offered her his love, but she rejecting it, he had turned against her, and in his heart sworn revenge.

"Will you allow me to go, Senor Aguia, or shall I appeal to your soldiers?" Inez demanded.

"My soldiers only obey my orders, senorita."

"Ah! as I said, led by their officers to deeds of villainy, no doubt some one among them really feels for me in my helplessness, but that feeling must be crushed out because of the evil in his commander's heart!" and her lip curled with scorn as she stepped lightly aside and drew her riding habit closely around her.

"We are losing time here, senorita, and must be going. Go with me quietly, or I will force you to go. I will ride by you and see that you destroy none of those secret dispatches you bear," and turning to the soldiers, who had stood in the background about twenty feet from their officer and his captive, Aguia called out:

"One of you fellows change this saddle from the dead horse to the one I brought here."

As they proceeded to obey, Inez looked around as if for some chance to escape, and seeing this the officer spoke warningly:

"Do not attempt to get away, senorita; it would be useless, and only subject you to personal violence, to recapture, and secure you."

Suddenly the sound of hoofs broke the stillness, and the next moment an officer in strange uniform dashed up and hastily glancing over the scene said sternly, "What means this?"

"Ha! Major Aldano!" exclaimed Aguia, turning to the newcomer, while Inez uttered a half-suppressed ejaculation of joy.

"Yes. Is that you, Aguia? And you, Senorita Valiente?"

And Major Aldano as he spoke quickly dismounted from his horse.

"Yes, Aldano, I have captured a spy, and intend to take my prize to headquarters."

"Where is the spy?" asked the Major.

"Here! This pretty girl."

"Where was she captured, Aguia?"

"Here. I shot her horse as she came along, for I was waiting for her."

"I cannot see that she is a spy, sir, and I cannot sanction war against women. You did a dastardly act, Colonel Aguia, when you shot the Senorita's horse."

"Major Aldano, you insult me! You forget, sir, who I am," and Aguia put his hand on his pistol.

"I never forget a villain, Colonel Aguia, when I once see him, and your act to-night has been a base outrage. Unfortunately, many Spanish officers in Cuba have forgotten their chivalry, and war upon women and children, but I will not sanction it," retorted the major, incisively.

"I tell you, sir, that I took this woman as a spy. I know that she bears important secret dispatches, and I intend to compel her to go with me to my headquarters and have her searched, and if guilty she must suffer as any other spy—taken out and shot! That is war law, as you very well know!"

"This spot is not within our lines, senor, and you have no right to here stop any one, much less a woman," and turning to Inez, Major Aldano continued:

"Senorita, I regret this indignity, and at the hands of a man who wears the same uniform as myself. I hope you are not injured by the fall of your horse?"

"No, senor, only for an instant stunned. How can I thank you for your timely protection against this ruffian?"

But, now that she had a protector near, Inez was almost overcome with emotion and her courage broke down in a flood of tears.

"Bring that horse you have saddled here!" called out the Major to the soldiers, and then to Inez he said:

"Senorita, I will aid you to your saddle and accompany you to Buena Vista, that no other mishap may befall you."

"Thanks, senor; a thousand thanks!"

"Major Aldano, I will not allow you to interfere in this way. Stand back and let my prisoner alone!" and the Cuban advanced with his sword drawn.

"Back, Aguia, as you value your life! Back, I say. I will not be trifled with now. Senorita Valiente is under my protection: do you dare question my authority or my courage?"

Carlos Aguia was at heart a coward, and the manner of the major cowered him; but, determined not to lose his prize without a struggle for it, he called to his men and once more advanced.

"Colonel Aguia, I warn you not to lay a hand upon this lady. Bring up that horse!" he called out to the soldiers again.

"Obey my orders, men!" said Aguia, and between the two the soldiers stood in uncertainty what to do. They knew that Colonel Aguia was simply a volunteer officer, while they knew the tried courage of Aldano and his immense influence and that he belonged to one of the oldest families of Spain; but then, Aguia was their colonel, and they were half inclined to follow his lead or obey his commands.

"Will you release that prisoner to me?" asked Aguia.

"This unprotected woman must be your first prisoner; this cowardly act to-night must be your first exploit in arms, from the manner in which you dwell upon the word prisoner!" returned Major Aldano, with provoking satire.

Aguia stepped forward, with drawn sword, saying in hot fury:

"We will contest for this prize, sir."

"As you will, senor!" and the two swords crossed and struck fire in the moonlight.

Inez could but stand in awe and gaze upon the combatants, while the soldiers with scared faces gathered around.

From the first pass made, Aguia saw that he had met his superior, and determined to use every strategy and endeavor to kill his antagonist.

With perfect coolness, and the quiet re-

mark: "I am sorry that my sword meets not that of a better adversary," Aldano set to work to disarm his antagonist, for he did not wish to kill, or even wound him.

The swords flashed fire there on that lonely highway, the light of the moon lit up the faces of the combatants, and the clash of steel against steel broke harshly upon the quietness of the otherwise quiet night.

At length Aguia began to give way, and Aldano, following up his advantage, by a well-directed blow struck his antagonist's weapon from his hand, saying:

"Go and pick up your sword, Colonel Aguia, and in future learn to use it in a better cause than it has been drawn to-night—to insult and make prisoner of a helpless woman."

Then to Inez, whose clasped hands and thankful look proved how glad she was to see Aguia defeated, the major said:

"Now, senorita, I will see you home," and calling to the soldier who held the horse to bring him forward, he was obeyed with alacrity, for the men at once sided with the victorious officer of the regular service.

Aguia picked up his sword, and mounting his horse turned to ride away, remarking in an angry tone:

"You shall repent this night's work, Aldano; I swear it by the living God! And you also, Senorita Inez, shall not go free. My hatred you shall yet be made to feel!"

"I shall send your horse, which I borrow from you for the senorita, to your quarters. Now, be off, sir! or I may not remain in a merciful mood!" and for the first time Inez saw the cavalier Spaniard begin to show thorough anger.

Calling to his men to follow, Aguia rode off, with a muttered curse, while Aldano, placing Inez in the saddle, they proceeded at a rapid gallop toward Buena Vista.

As they rode up to the door, Senora Valiente and Nita, who were awaiting Inez's return with the greatest anxiety, heard the approach of the horses, and Inez, springing to the ground, was clasped in her mother's arms, while Nita congratulated her over and over again upon her safe return.

Major Aldano had dismounted to aid Inez, and now turned to depart, when she called to him:

"Come in, Major Aldano, and let Maxillo take your horse."

Raising his hat, the major approached and made reply:

"I merely acted as I should have done, senorita, and do not wish to presume upon it to darken your doors with the Spanish uniform."

Inez hastily recounted to her mother and Nita how the major had rescued her, but he, interrupting, said, while pointing to Nita, "There is the cause of my fortunate arrival upon the scene!"

This he further explained: "To-night I received word that a lady on horseback wished to see me, and going out of my quarters I saw Senorita Nita, who informed me of your rash trip, and I at once mounted my horse, determined to ride down near the rebel—I beg your pardon, ladies—the Cuban lines, and see if I could meet you, for I feared you might come upon some of our roving bands who, I admit, are ruffians."

"Oh! Nita; you rode alone to-night to the Spanish camp to aid me?" questioned Inez, touched at the young girl's devotion, while Senora Valiente added:

"Nita, now I know where you were when the house was searched for you. Why did you not tell me?"

"I did nothing. Inez has been to the Patriot camp and back, while I merely went a few miles," asserted Nita.

"Major Aldano, I never thought a Spaniard would cross my door by invitation, yet I now ask you to do so. Come in, senor, and share with Inez the repast I had prepared for her return. I wish you to come in, sir!" and Senora Valiente extended her hand.

The Major still hesitated, but when

urged by Inez and Nita, he entered the house after telling Maxilio to keep his horse in readiness for him to leave in a short time.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PERILOUS SEA VOYAGE.

After partaking of the repast set before Inez and himself, and resting for half an hour, Major Aldano arose to depart, when Senora Valiente said to him:

"Major, you have proved yourself such a kind friend to us that we can hardly look upon you as an enemy, and hope that you will favor us with a visit whenever you feel inclined."

"I thank you, madam, and shall avail myself of your kind invitation. In far-off Spain I had a mother and sister whom I loved dearly and I know they would have disowned me had I acted differently from what I have. I can but deplore this war, and wish for its happy termination in favor of the Cubans, yet, as an officer of Spain, I shall endeavor all in my power to put down those whom we term rebels."

"Senorita Inez knows where to find me if I am needed, and as you have kindly promised to send Maxilio to the Agula plantation with this horse, there is nothing more for me to do, so I will say adios and au revoir."

And leaving the house, Major Pierre Aldano mounted and rode away.

Early the next morning Inez and Nita drove to Bonito's and told him to be in readiness with his sloop, for he must start that night. The fisherman promised to be ready and returning home the young girls visited the hospital, where the seamen were ordered to prepare for their departure.

Fearful lest some indiscretion of theirs might disarrange their plans, the three ladies were in a state of nervous excitement during the day, but as evening approached they grew calm and their courage arose, courage that was needed, for they knew that soon they must grapple with danger.

Shortly after dark a wagon, apparently filled with fishing nets, but having under the nets the four seamen, went from the plantation, with Pedro Maxilio's brother driving. Soon after it was followed by the carriage containing Senora Valiente, her daughter and Nita, besides Maxilio and the footman.

After an hour's drive they arrived at the fisherman's hut. The little sloop was riding at anchor near the beach, her sails set. The wagon had already arrived and the men were on board. So, at once calling the fisherman, Inez gave him his instructions with the map which Gen. Jordan had placed in her hands, the little bay upon it marked where the sloop was to put in for Lieutenant Dalton.

"Now, Bonito," she continued, "Pedro and Maxilio will accompany you, and come back with the sloop. Juan will look after us and be our coachman until their return."

"Yes, senorita, I will take care of you same as Max," and the negro seemed delighted at the responsibility.

"Juan, you take the wagon back, and I'll drive the carriage," and Inez took the reins. "Now, Bonito, make all haste to depart, and give to Lieutenant Dalton the letters I have intrusted you with."

"I will attend to all, fair lady," and doffing his cap, the fisherman descended the hill toward the water, while the two faithful negroes bade adieu to the ladies and followed him.

Watching, the party in the carriage saw them board the sloop, and shortly after the little craft sailed out of the harbor and shaped her course down the coast.

Then Inez spoke to her horses, and drove rapidly back to Bueno Vista, where they safely arrived.

Before a good wind the little shallop ran down the coast at the rate of six knots an hour, and just at daybreak entered the bay where Lieutenant Dalton awaited its arrival.

Receiving the answer agreed upon to their signal, a boat was sent ashore and soon returned with the young American officer.

He cordially greeted all on board, and, after conversing with them for a while, it was agreed that they should at once put to sea and not remain in the bay until dark, as it was a very insecure hiding place, and if it was reported to Spaniards that the sloop was on that part of the coast, a gunboat would at once be sent to head them off and perhaps capture them.

So the fishing craft again put to sea and by noon had left the island out of sight.

Toward nightfall the wind arose, and each moment increased in fury, until shortly after dark it blew a gale.

With the sails close reefed, her hatches fastened down, and each man secured from danger, the staunch little vessel sped on, bounding from wave to wave, yet trembling like a thing of life as the surging sea threatened to engulf her.

Bonito stood grasping the mast with one hand, and with the other holding up a lantern, that, in the darkness and storm, they might not be run down by some passing vessel, while Dalton was at the helm, aided by Maxilio.

Dalton was cool and firm, and his cheery voice, joking upon the dangers around them, raised him in the estimation of all his companions.

"Sloop, ahoy!" came in hoarse tones from astern.

And the startled men turned and saw, bearing down on them, about one hundred yards off, a large three-masted schooner with her fore and mainsail and her jib reef down.

As they glanced at her she rose on a wave. Then her hull was seen to be white and the men in the sloop, in one voice cried out, "the Hornet"!!!

Rapidly overhauling them, the schooner was now but a short distance astern, and they could distinctly see, clinging to the forward man-ropes the form of an officer, who, placing his speaking trumpet to his lips, called out:

"Whither bound, in that little craft?"

"In search of the Hornet," answered Dalton, through the tin speaking trumpet belonging to the sloop.

"This is the Hornet! What craft is that?" again called out Mordaunt, for it was the captain who spoke.

"Don't know her name! Forgot to look!" yelled Dalton, while the crews of both vessels joined in a hearty laugh at his reply, "but," he yelled, "we are in search of you Frank! I am Westley Dalton."

"A greater fool than I took you for, West, to trust yourself at sea in that shell!" was the plainly heard retort.

"I was not born to be hung, Frank, so I thought I would try drowning! I am the bearer of dispatches to you and to the New-York Junta. We put out in search of you."

"All right, keep your course, and we'll hold near you until morning, then take you aboard. Now that is impossible."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The sloop stood on her course again, and the schooner, taking in most of her sail, kept in close proximity. Thus the two, the Hornet and the fishing smack, rode out the lone hours of that stormy night.

The wind gradually went down, and toward noon the following day the sea had subsided sufficiently to allow the boat from the schooner to be launched, and with eight good oarsmen, and Frank Mordaunt at the helm, it came toward the little shallop, which was now lying to, awaiting its approach.

Coming alongside, Frank sprang on the sloop and cheerily grasped Dalton's hand.

"And you, Bonito, and Max and Davis! What? All of you here?" And the surprised cruiser commander shook hands all around.

After a short conversation with Dalton it was decided that the four seamen

should at once go on board the schooner; then Mordaunt added:

"You are the very man I wish, West. You can have poor Oscar Herbert's place, as third officer."

"Maxilio, you and Pedro return with Bonito, and when I go aboard the schooner, I will send Bueno back to you with letters for the Senorita Inez, and with a little present for yourselves, not forgetting the brave fisherman here, the Patriot friend."

"Thanks, Captain Mordaunt. If I were a younger man I would be glad to follow your lead, but I must stay at home and look after my little ones," said the fisherman.

Entering, the small boat with Dalton and the four seamen was again put back to the schooner, and after an hour's absence returned with Bueno, who handed to the fisherman and the negroes each a purse of gold with Captain Mordaunt's compliments.

And to Maxilio he gave a large packet of letters, which he said were to be delivered into Miss Inez's hands.

Bueno then returned to the schooner, while the sloop got under way and started back toward the Cuban coast.

"If we have good luck, lads, we will reach home by day after to-morrow morning," informed Bonito.

Upon the return of the boat the cruiser stood off on a northerly course dipping her Lone Star, flag three times in compliment to the little sloop.

Need we tell you of the surprise and pleasure of Inez and Nita when, four days after the fisherman's departure, they drove down the beach and saw the little sloop just dropping anchor in the bay, and recognized upon her decks only her owner and the faithful Max and Pedro?

Coming on shore they were warmly greeted by the girls, and Juan had orders to drive home as rapidly as his horses could take them—to bear the good news and to read the precious messages.

In Senora Valiente's room the loving letters from Frank and Eduardo were read, and their faces flushed with pride as they learned of the exploits of the gallant vessel since her departure from the island the night of the Spaniards' attack, which had caused much mourning in the neighborhood.

Ordering their horses, and accompanied by Max, whose face wore as innocent an expression as if he knew nothing of what had been going on, the two young ladies rode round to the neighboring plantations and distributed the letters sent to them from the Hornet's commander and men.

All was joy in that neighborhood once more.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHASE AND THE SPANIARDS' END.

On board the Hornet as she sailed defiantly out of the little cove, after the combat with the Spaniards, there was no giving way to sorrow or despondency. Men and officers had suffered much, and death had made many vacant places in the crew.

If Mordaunt had to mourn the loss of Senor Gonzales, whom he dearly loved, and as Nita's father, Eduardo also equally sorrowed for him, Rudolph mourned his mother's loss, and Estevan bitterly grieved over his sister's death. Then there was poor old Jacko dead, who had taught Eduardo to hunt and ride, and cared for him during his early childhood, and really was much beloved. Herbert, the gallant officer and true friend had fallen also. Henriques, the bright, almost childish midshipman, had gone from among his comrades.

Yes! Death had stalked in high carnival there, and bitterly did the privateersmen swear vengeance upon the ruthless Spaniards and home despoilers—the foes of Cuba Libre!

At daylight the flag was run up at half-mast, the decks were cleared, and while careering along over the waters, all eyes were bent in watchfulness for a sail, anything carrying the Spanish flag.

that a retaliation might be made upon their enemies—for retaliation, hatred, revenge, now inspired every soul on board the Patriot cruiser.

Standing across the gulf, the Hornet sped on for days, and one afternoon, cloudy and threatening, Mordaunt and Edwardo were pacing the deck when the former, looking out to windward, stopped and after gazing steadily for a few moments, asked:

"Edwardo, is not that the smoke of a steamer?"

Edwardo, now studying the sea horizon, was about to answer, when the lookout cried:

"Steamer ho!"

"Where away?" called out Mordaunt.

"Three points off our starboard quarter, sir," from the lookout.

"I thought so. What are we making, Edwardo?"

"Seven knots, sir."

"Crowd on more sail. What do you make of her?" the cruiser commander called out to the man in the maintop.

"A small steamer with one smoke-stack. She has changed her course, sir. Yes, she is steering down toward us, sir."

"One of those gunboats that were built in New-York to war against us, I wager high," averred Edwardo, leveling his glass at the steamer, which was now visible at about six miles distance.

"What do you make of her?" again called out Mordaunt.

"She is quite a small steamer, and carries one gun forward, sir. Her decks are filled with men," came from the maintop.

"As I expected. Thank old Boreas for coming on strong, for we may need his aid."

Mordaunt and Edwardo continued their walk up and down the deck, now all expectancy and quite ready for any adventure.

"Keep her away a little, helmsman, I do not wish to run too close to that fellow until I know more about him," said Mordaunt to the man at the wheel.

For some time no change was made in the course of either steamer or schooner, then not more than three miles separated them.

"Run up the American flag," ordered Captain Mordaunt, and in a moment the "Stars and Stripes" were given to the breeze, and, as an answer, the flag of Spain flaunted from the steamer's peak.

"Haul down the Stars and Stripes and show them our own colors!" called out Mordaunt, on seeing the Spanish ensign.

And as the Lone Star flag went up a loud cheer broke from the schooner's crew.

"Beat to quarters!"

The order was almost unnecessary, for the crew had assembled around their respective guns, evidently anxious to come in contact with the steamer.

"There is great commotion on the steamer, sir! She has beat to quarters!" yelled out the watch at the masthead.

"Let her beat! That is just what we will do—beat her into quarters!" said Mordaunt.

At which all the men applauded by a clapping of hands.

The wind was increasing rapidly, and, as the two vessels neared each other, Mordaunt was fearful lest a gale should come on and prevent a combat, for he had determined to fight the Spaniard.

"She rolls too heavily. Put her off before the wind, helmsman, and we will give her our compliments during a stern chase," announced the cruiser captain.

The schooner bowed off gracefully, but as she did so, the Spaniard fired a shot across her bow.

"Return the compliment, Estevan!" and a shot from the stern gun, under Midshipman Estevan, passed directly over the steamer's decks.

"Well done, but a little too high," and as the Captain spoke a large shot from the gunboat struck near and covered the Hornet with spray on the windward side.

Again Estevan fired. His ball struck the smokestack of the steamer.

The Spaniards' reply made the schooner's helmsman dodge his neck, it came so close over the stern railing.

"This practice is improving. Bring her up, helmsman, so we can give them a broadside; then put her on her course again!" and Mordaunt's face flushed with excitement.

"Now, steady, as you are! Ready all? Fire!"

The three guns of the Hornet sent their iron hail toward the steamer, and with effect, for great commotion was observed on board, one of the shots having struck her amidships.

But the Spaniard still stood on after the schooner, and her next shot carried away the foretopmast of the cruiser, and hurled the lookout into the sea.

Frank glanced up at the rigging, then out into the ocean where the man had fallen, and, seeing nothing of him, said:

"Put her away again, helmsman, and I will bring her up for another broadside. Estevan, keep up your practice there!"

Night was coming on and the wind increasing, and as the schooner was nearing the Florida coast, Mordaunt consulted with his officers and decided to fight the steamer at long range.

Walking aft, he ordered the helmsman to bring her up on the starboard tack, and the gunners to give her another broadside.

Simultaneously the steamer fired. Her shot struck the schooner amidships, just above the bulwarks, and four men fell lifeless, while five more were wounded.

"They have hurt us badly, but, by heaven! we have paid them for it!" and as Mordaunt spoke the steamer was seen to stop her headway, and, a moment after, was rolling fearfully in the troughs of the high seas.

"Give it to her again!"

And again and again the Hornet's guns poured upon the fated steamer their iron missiles, until, with a lift of her bow upward and a lurch forward, the gunboat sank in the seething waters, with the flag of proud old despotic Spain still flying!

For an instant it fluttered, then was lapped up by the bounding waves, and was lost to sight forever more!—"Wrecked on the Florida reefs," the papers in the United States afterward stated.

"My God! This is horrible!" said Edwardo to Mordaunt, and the latter returned:

"It is, indeed; but war is war, and it was the Spaniard's end or ours!"

"Put the helm up and run down over the spot and see if we can save any poor drowning wretch," was the order, and the Hornet sailed and resailed over the waters which had been the grave of the steamer, but no vestige of her or of her crew could be found.

CHAPTER XVII.

CRUISER CAPTAIN ASHORE ONCE MORE.

After the engagement with the Spanish gunboat the Hornet repaired damages and cruised around the Gulf for nine days, but then, as two of the wounded men had died, and provisions begun to get low, Mordaunt determined to sail for the supply depot on Barataria Island, so the cruiser was put on her course for the retreat, an island which was once the resort of the famous sea brigand and smuggler chief, Lafitte.

In a few days the Hornet dropped anchor off the island, and Dalton was sent ashore with a boatload of men to reconnoitre.

Two hours passed, and as Dalton did not return, Mordaunt began to feel anxious about him, and he and Edwardo strained their eyes in endeavoring to pierce the darkness.

Suddenly, as they listened, the sound of oars was heard, as if the men were pulling with a strong and rapid stroke, and then Dalton's voice hailed:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"Ahoy the boat!" answered Mordaunt.

"Get under sail at once! Tack and come down for me. We are pursued!" came distinctly from the boat.

"Stop that boat, or we'll fire into it!" was then heard, far off.

"Fire at your will!" came in answer from Westley Dalton.

This proved to Mordaunt that his boat was being pursued.

The Hornet's sails were set, the men were at quarters in a few minutes, and, as the anchor left the bottom, the schooner began to move through the water.

Mordaunt took the helm himself, ordering Edwardo to be ready to have lines thrown to the boat, and, under a fair wind, the cruiser tacked down toward the small boat, which was still advancing with steady stroke, while in its wake could be seen three more boats in full chase, about a hundred yards astern.

"Stop that boat!" again came from some man in the leading pursuing boat, and Dalton's mocking reply:

"Stop that boat, and save yourself a long pull back!" caused a general laugh on the schooner.

"Stand ready to catch the lines thrown you, Dalton," called out Mordaunt, as the schooner approached.

"Ay, ay, sir. Clear swing!"

And at the order, the men shipped their oars, a line was thrown by Edwardo and caught by Dalton, and the boat was drawn rapidly along the schooner's stern.

"Bravo, Dalton! I'll tow you a little while until we get out of the company of these gentlemen, and then haul up the boat."

"Yes, Captain Mordaunt, and put the schooner on her best sailing points, and get out of this, for one of those rapid little revenue cutters will be after us soon," announced Dalton from the boat.

"Crowd her with sail from topmast to deck, Edwardo. Put on all she will carry. We have to run for it now or become a prize for United States Marshals!"

The alacrity with which all orders were obeyed showed how such a fate was dreaded by officers and men.

The boat was drawn close, the men sprang on board the schooner, then the cutter was hauled to its place, and, under a cloud of canvas, the Hornet scurried away from her pursuers like a frightened bird.

Dalton walked aft, and informed Mordaunt and Edwardo that he had gone on shore, and, leaving four men in the boat, had ascended the hill toward a small cabin which was there, and which he supposed was where the Cuban agent was staying. He had proceeded only a little way, when he met a woman, who called him and asked if he belonged to the schooner outside. Upon his answering in the affirmative, she stated that she was the wife of the Cuban agent, and gave the information that the United States Marshals had learned of the stores being hidden there, and had come down and seized them and had just gone back to the other side of the island to look up his men to go out and capture the schooner some time after midnight.

"I ordered my men," continued Dalton, "to await my coming, and, to satisfy myself of the truth of the woman's statement, I went with her to the cabin, and saw that boxes had been broken open and a general search made. Then I went back into the island and came upon another cabin, and in this were seated three or four men, conversing and drinking at a table, and I heard one of them say: 'About twenty fellows will be here in a few minutes.' At that I decided it was best to be off; and none too soon, for up came the gang, and seeing me skedaddle, the whole party took after me pell mell.

"I looked back, and as I did so, ran over the woman, the agent's wife, and over we rolled together. A poor return for her saving information, but I scrambled up; my haste left me no time to show my gallantry by setting her right side up again, and, as I continued my race, I looked back, and I verily believe that every individual man of the Marshal's army ran over that unprotected female, for, as she attempted to rise, some

fellow, as he ran up, would not perceive her, and over they would go together, until, by degrees, she was rolled nearly back to the beach.

"As I came up, my men took to their heels also, and we had a pretty scamper of it, but won the race by reaching our boat and shoving off, while our pursuers entered the boats which had brought them there. Well, you know the rest," and Dalton, with a hearty laugh at his adventure, went below to change his deranged clothing.

"I am very glad, Eduardo, that Westley acted with such discretion, for had he fired on the United States officials it would have done us great harm," said Mordaunt to his Lieutenant, after Dalton had gone to the cabin.

"Indeed it would; but, how I would have liked to have seen that race!" and Eduardo and Mordaunt laughed again at Westley's account of his retreat.

"Now, what is to be done? We are short of provisions and of men, and must recuperate; besides, the schooner needs some repairs," asked Eduardo of Mordaunt, as they were standing near the gun, talking together.

"Here, Duke, you and Dalton come down in the cabin for a few moments. Come, Eduardo, and leave De Silva in charge of the deck," called out Mordaunt in answer to Eduardo's question.

The four officers descended to the handsome cabin of the Hornet, and, being seated, Mordaunt said:

"Having been disappointed in getting supplies and men, which were at the island for us, we have now but one course left us that I can see, and that is to return to our northern rendezvous, for, remember, the world is against us, and there is no port we can enter in safety."

"I agree with you, Frank, and think we had best at once steer for Hill's Island in Casco Bay."

"Whatever you decide upon, Frank, you know I am with you," returned Duke, while Dalton added, dolefully:

"To Hill's Island then we go, but I hope there is no agent's wife there!"

"No; but as pretty a girl as you ever laid your eyes on," put in Duke.

"Then go, by all means!" urged Dalton; at which all could but laugh.

So the question was settled to go to Casco Bay again.

"Duke, I wish to leave you in command of the vessel, for I am going ashore bound for New Orleans. From there I shall go on to Casco, and I wish Eduardo to accompany me. We must hail or purchase some fishing smack. I will pay him well to put us ashore, and we can go right up to the city and on to New York. Once there all will be arranged. I will secure the needed men and have all fresh supplies sent on to Portland."

"I wish to get Hill a good little schooner of about ten tons, and that will just hold what we need in the way of provisions and outfits, and the men I ship can man her, so I will run her down to the rendezvous and will then cruise about Casco Bay, keeping a bright lookout for you."

This full explanation quite delighted "all hands," and, calling Bueno, Mordaunt told him to get out his and Eduardo's citizens' clothes and have them ready. A fishing boat was soon seen close in shore, and, hiding the guns with tarpaulins, the Hornet ran down to her, and, after a parley, the fisherman agreed to take the men ashore.

Accordingly, the cruiser commander and Eduardo left the vessel for the fishing smack, Bueno rowing them in the small boat, he having disrobed himself also of his sailor garb.

Standing by the helm of the little vessel the two young officers gazed in admiration at the Hornet as she sped away from them; until she was lost to sight in the darkness, and then, not wishing to retire to the cramped-up cabin, they remained on deck until daylight, when they were fortunate in getting on board a tugboat going directly up to the city.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ENLISTING A SPY.

Arriving at New Orleans, Mordaunt and Eduardo started almost immediately for New York, and upon their arrival presented themselves before the Cuban Junta, many of whom Eduardo had known in his native land.

Hearing of a small schooner of fifteen tons' burden for sale in Boston, the Hornet's commander sent Eduardo to that city to see if it was a suitable craft, and upon finding that it was exactly such a one as was desired, Eduardo made the purchase and bargained with an old sailor and two companions to sail it to Portland for him, after which he returned to New York.

Frank, in the mean time, enlisted a crew of fifteen good men, and having the supplies sent to Portland by steamer, he went on himself to attend to their being put on the little schooner there.

With the aid of a merchant in Portland the goods were soon stored away in the schooner; then Frank telegraphed to Eduardo and his party to come on as soon as possible.

All arriving on the early morning boat from Boston, they were met by Mordaunt and by daylight were safely housed on board the little purchase, which at once made all haste from the harbor, for she was lying almost under the shadows of a revenue cutter.

Fearing to excite suspicions of any one on the islands in Casco Bay by starting direct for the rendezvous, Frank put out to sea, and after losing sight of land, changed his course and started for the island.

Upon entering the bay all were equally surprised to see the sharp white prows of the Hornet coming from behind one of the islands and heading toward them, for Duke had made a rapid run and was cruising about in search of the little schooner.

Mordaunt at once boarded his vessel, and ordering the little tender to follow, he steered for Hill's Island, arriving there about midnight, but immediately running the vessel into the basin. That done, he went outside again in the cutter and in through the dangerous and circuitous channel he piloted the little schooner.

"Frank, I do not like the looks of one of your men, for I think he is a traitor. More than once I caught him trying to give me the slip while we were coming on."

"His eyes look too much like DeVega's for him to be an honest man," said Eduardo to his friend, while the two were pacing the deck, smoking, after the two vessels had been moored alongside in the island covert.

"I remember the fellow, Ed, and must confess I do not like his face. DeVega has long hair and beard, of which he was very vain, and though this fellow is clean shaven, and has short hair, there is, as you say, a striking resemblance between the two."

"Did you say this hole is called the Devil's Punch Bowl, Frank?" interrupted the gay Dalton, as he came towards his commander.

"It is not a bad name for it, West, though I only know it as the basin," answered Frank.

"Yes, a basin with a hole in it which Uncle Sam's revenue boys would like to find out, I guess, and which they will crawl into if you do not hang—and try by jury afterward—one of the cut-throat recruits you brought with you from New York."

"I was eating a pear, and caught that fellow's eyes upon me, glinting like cuttle-fish's. From what penitentiary did you get him?"

"You are rather severe on the poor devil, West. Eduardo and myself were just speaking of him. He was sent to me by one of our New York agents, as an honest and trustworthy man."

"Lord have mercy upon our agent! He must be an Italian to call that fellow a Cuban Patriot and an honest man. I wouldn't be caught on the same ship

with that customer on any account, for we'd all be hung as soon as our captors caught sight of him, as a set of pirates."

"Well, we must keep a sharp lookout upon him, but not let him suspect we are watching," said Mordaunt.

"I hate to watch a man; it hurts my conscience. Let's hang him; it will save us lots of trouble," and the lively Lieutenant lit his cigar and entered the cabin, to which the Captain and Eduardo soon after followed.

They had been gone but a few minutes from the deck when a man's form was drawn up over the stern of the schooner, and shaking his hand toward the cabin he muttered to himself:

"Yes, you shall all pay for this. You have enlisted a spy, my handsome Captain—a spy who will yet bring your neck into a noose. You have foiled me often, but I have you now;" and as the man went forward the light from the cabin fell upon him and revealed the evil face of DeVega. It indeed was he! Cutting off his fine hair and beard, he was greatly changed, but he could not disguise the wicked glint of his eye, nor the devil lurking in his every look and movement.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE HERMIT HOUSE.

Upon arising from his bed the morning after the events just related, Dick Hill, the island hermit, was again astonished to find the basin occupied, but soon recognized the Hornet and at once descended to the beach to look up Mordaunt.

He was admitted upon the schooner, and going into the cabin discovered Mordaunt and his officers at breakfast. Perceiving him, Mordaunt called out, while he arose and extended his hand:

"Hill, my old friend, I am glad to see you! You see we have returned to the rendezvous."

"Yes, I am glad to see you back safe, Captain, and you, Lieutenant Eduardo."

"Yes, we have returned with our vessel, but have lost two of our officers and a number of our men. But allow me to present my other friends here," and Mordaunt introduced the islander to his officers.

"Now, sit down and have some breakfast with us. Bueno, arrange a place here! Tell us how are the madam and Miss May?"

"Both well, thank you, Captain, and they will be delighted to see you and your friends. You gentlemen must come up and dine with us to-day."

"Which we will be much pleased to do," assured Mordaunt.

After breakfast the cruiser Captain set the carpenters at work repairing the schooner and the men to transferring the supplies from the little vessel to the Hornet.

"See here, Hill, I have brought you this little schooner as a gift, and in it you can be of great service to me."

"There is one man on board my vessel whom I can trust thoroughly, and I intend to leave him with you, and once every two weeks I wish you to run up to Portland and let him go ashore for letters. I will give you an address of parties there, whom you can communicate with, and whenever I anticipate returning here to the rendezvous you can be informed from a letter from me, which I will mail at some Southern port, and you can then get the supplies here in readiness for my arrival. I will at once put you on my payroll, and you can draw pay from to-day as an agent. How does the place suit you?"

"Very well, Captain, I will do anything to please you. But come up to the house and see the old woman and May," and together the two ascended the hill.

"There's the girl now," and Hill pointed to the cliff, where May, a book in her hand, was seated gazing listlessly out upon the ocean.

"I'll join her and come to the house after a while," and leaving the fisherman to go on alone to his cabin, Mordaunt took the path leading to the cliff.

Approaching the spot unperceived, he said quietly, "May!"

In an instant the book was dropped, and springing up, her arms were around his neck, while she cried:

"Oh! Frank, Frank! I knew you would come back to me!"

Frank felt pained to see that his absence had not conquered her love for him, but greeted her affectionately, and then sat down upon the bank beside her.

"Frank, I have come here day and night and glanced far out upon the ocean, to see if the white sail of the *Hornet* was not visible; but I always met with disappointment, and turned homeward with pain—pain here—Frank," and the young girl pressed her hand upon her heart.

"I hoped and prayed for your coming, prayed to that God who, mother says, rules over all; but you stayed away from me. Now, Frank, you are once more here; you will never leave me; you will not go back to that woman whom you said you loved; you will stay with me now, Frank!" and as the girl spoke, and gazed pleadingly into his face, the tears came into her eyes, and made her still more beautiful.

"Yes, I have come back, May, and I will tell you all about my voyage, for dangers have beset me since I left, and I have lost many dear friends. Listen!" And with May leaning upon his knee, as a little child would have done, and looking up fondly into his face, Mordaunt told her of his adventures, and why he had come again to the island. He told her, too, of Inez Valiente, leaving out not a word of his deep love for her, and of her devotion to her country; of her long, lonely ride to serve the Cuban cause, and how brave she was.

For an hour he talked to her, and the fair young creature listened breathlessly to his story; but when he spoke of Inez the blood left her face; her teeth were set, and Frank was almost alarmed at the expression there.

At last he finished his story, and May said:

"I thank you, Frank, for telling me all. I must not love you now, for you do not care for me, and there is another who loves you. But, if you only knew how dear you are to me—if you knew that I would go through all your Cuban beauty did and far more for my love for you, you would care for me; but, Frank, I will try and not make you miserable; I will try and be to you as a sister, as you wish me to; but please let me go with you when you leave here, for I will be so lonely, ah! so lonely!" and the beautiful dark blue eyes again filled with tears.

The head with its wealth of golden hair dropped forward upon the man's shoulder, and her whole frame trembled with the bitterness of her grief.

"May, this pains me very, very much. You must not act in this way. You know I cannot take you with me, and it makes me unhappy to see you suffer thus."

"I will not make you unhappy, Frank," and like sunlight breaking through a cloud a smile came upon the face so full of suffering. A smile trembled on the lips while tears were in the heart, and taking his hand, she said:

"I'll be good now. Come, let us go to the house."

"Yes, for I have something there for you; I brought some presents for you all," and going down to the cabin with the fair girl accompanying him, Frank received a warm welcome from Mrs. Hill; and Bueno having brought up from the schooner a small trunk, Mordaunt opened it and distributed the contents of books, a guitar, some little trinkets, and some dresses and shoes.

Both Mrs. Hill and May were delighted with their presents, and the girl particularly so with the guitar, for she had an old one that once had been her mother's, and had learned to accompany herself well with it when she sang. And sing well she certainly did, for, though her voice was untutored, it was naturally very fine, and her mother had taught her many of the songs of her girlhood—songs

which she had sung to Dick Hill thirty years before, when they had been children together.

At Hill's request, his wife invited Frank to come the next day and bring his officers to dinner with him. "May and I will look our best," she said, smilingly; "in some of these pretty things you have brought us we will make ourselves quite good-looking, won't we, husband?"

"You are always pretty, wife," Hill responded, and then, as if unpleasant remembrances had been called up to his mind, he arose and left the cabin.

"You ought to give the Captain a kiss, May, for his kindness," said Mrs. Hill.

May glanced up; her face flushed crimson and the trembling lips showed how gladly she would do so, but she conquered her emotion and remarked quietly:

"You said I was too large to kiss gentlemen, now."

"Yes, but the Captain is an old friend—a brother to you."

"Yes, Frank is my brother now!"

The unutterable sadness with which May spoke touched Frank deeply, and he hastily changed the subject.

CHAPTER XX.

A DASTARD ATTEMPT.

Dressed in full uniform and wearing their swords, the officers of the *Hornet* walked up to the cabin of Dick Hill to accept the Madam's kind invitation to dine there.

All was bustle and preparation in the cabin. Mrs. Hill and May flew about from kitchen to dining-room, determined that their guests should have the best the island afforded.

Hill had produced from a trap door leading beneath the kitchen some choice old wines which he had taken from a wreck some fifteen years before, and, dressed in his best suit, a blue shirt and black pants, he sat down to await the coming of his guests.

Mordaunt had sent Bueno up to the cabin to aid Mrs. Hill, and that worthy was in his element among the good things that were cooking.

May was dressed in a neat gray suit, her hair was braided and hung down her back far below her waist, and the white collar and red ribbon around her neck were very becoming to her style of beauty.

Indeed, she looked perfectly lovely, though a close observer might have noticed that her smile was forced and that there was a slight expression of pain about her fair young face.

At last the guests arrived, and entering the cabin, after Edwardo had been welcomed by Hill, his wife and daughter, Mordaunt presented his officers.

No belle in society could have received her admirers more gracefully than did May, and her cordial manner of offering her hand to each made them feel at once at home.

Dalton had imagined her to be some pretty, untutored savage, and expected to talk with her about the cows and pigs and the best laying hen, and was so nonplussed at what he beheld that he sat down mechanically, and leant back so far in his chair that he came near going over backwards. In bringing himself down to a level the forelegs of the chair came down on the cat's tail, when there came a note of lamentation so loud and deep that all present were startled, but only to be amused by the earnest "Blast that cat's eyes!" from the young sailor.

A general laugh at Dalton's expense put all in a good humor, and feeling satisfied that he had gotten even with the cat for turning the laugh upon him, he joined in the joke and said:

"Miss Hill, it has always been my misfortune to make a decided impression when I dine out. I remember on one occasion, after being introduced to a dozen ladies, I sat down on an old maid's lap, and remained there about as long as I did on that cat's tail. A few days after I sat down at table with a large party; I say sat down, but did not stay down, for there was a pin bent up and placed

in my chair by the very bad boy son of our host, and I got up in such haste that I half upset the table."

Dalton's account of his misadventures set all at once on a familiar footing, and being summoned by Bueno to dinner, Mordaunt arose and offering his arm to Mrs. Hill led the way, while Dalton came next with May; then Dick Hill and the other officers brought up the rear.

A sumptuous dinner it was, and all enjoyed it.

Under the influence of good wine, Dalton's jokes all passed off pleasantly.

After dinner May sang for them, accompanying herself upon the new guitar which Mordaunt had given her, and singing in a simple unaffected manner that quite won the hearts of her hearers.

After a pleasant talk over their cigars, the officers took their leave, excepting Mordaunt, who, asking May to walk with him, they proceeded toward the cliff.

The sun was just setting, and a flood of gold rested upon sea and sky, and all nature seemed as if sinking to sleep under the quiet influence of the lovely evening.

Frank and May stood for some moments gazing upon the scene and the former spoke,

"May, I was charmed with you to-day, you are indeed a dear little sister. Why, no one would have known that you had not mingled in society all your life!"

The words of praise from the man she so passionately loved were music to her ears. She smiled her thanks and then said: "I hope you will always be pleased with me, Frank; but, hark!"

"What is it, May?" asked her companion, listening.

"I thought I heard a step in the woods behind us. Some of the cattle, I suppose," the Captain inferred.

"No, Frank, the cattle do not come here. It must have been some of your men!" and their interview was resumed.

"Do you not like Dalton, May?" Mordaunt asked.

"Yes, he is very amusing and pleasant," she replied.

"And one of the noblest men who ever lived," the Captain asserted. "I have known Westley Dalton for years, and never have known him guilty of an unkind or mean action. He likes you very much, May."

"Does he?" and from the simple reply Mordaunt could gain no indication as to her interest in the matter.

"Yes; he spoke of you as very beautiful, and said he hoped you would permit him to come to see you."

"Your friends are my friends, Frank, and I will always welcome them with pleasure,—but oh! look—!"

The words were drowned in the loud report of a gun, and Mordaunt staggered back, with his hand pressed to his head.

"You are hurt! Oh! you are hurt, Frank!" almost shrieked the girl, while Frank, recovering himself, reassured her:

"No, only stunned, but it came near being my death-blow. Who could have fired that shot, I wonder?" and taking May by the arm Frank led her toward the house.

A small stream of blood was dropping from his forehead, and upon arriving at the cabin it was found that the ball had grazed his head, cutting the skin slightly, but otherwise not injuring him.

Putting a piece of wet cloth over the wound, Frank descended rapidly to the beach, and going on board the schooner called out to the officer of the deck:

"Duke, have all hands called. Assemble them aft!"

"Ay, ay, Sir!"

And in a few minutes the crew of the schooner were all present.

"Call the roll and see who is missing!" was the next order.

The roll was called, but not a man was absent.

"That is strange," said Frank, and he continued: "Whoever it was was quick about it." Raising his voice he said:

"Men, I am pained to say that some one among your number has taken an underhand manner of settling a griev-

ance he may have against me. While upon the cliff, a few moments ago, conversing with Miss Hill, I was shot at in the dark, and the ball just grazed my temple here"; and Mordaunt, raising his cap, showed the wound.

An indignant murmur ran through the crowd of officers and men, and muttered curses were uttered.

"I have always," he continued, "endeavored to do my duty by my men, and urged them, if they had any cause for complaint, to come to me. Whoever fired at me has taken a cowardly advantage, and I warn him that, were I to ascertain who it was, I would shoot him down without mercy. I am not aware that I have injured any one of you, by word or act, since I have been the commander of this vessel, and this moment have not the slightest suspicion of who my intended assassin was. I thank Heaven he was foiled."

Cheers made the basin ring, and the men dispersed, swearing vengeance against the would-be murderer, while the officers sought the cabin and discussed the matter until late into the night.

A sailor leant against the forward gun looking out upon the water.

"Yes, foiled again—but, my gallant Captain, thy days are numbered," the fellow muttered.

The man was De Vega!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DOOMED DASTARD.

All being in readiness for departure, Mordaunt gave orders for the schooner to prepare for sailing. Duke had gone down in the little coaster, with Hill, to Portland, and had returned with letters of instruction to Mordaunt, from the Cuban Junta.

These informed him that a party of a hundred men, with arms and munitions of war, would be sent to a certain point on the Florida coast, to await his coming, and that he should take them over on the cruiser, and land them in Cuba. The cargo would be a great help to the struggling Patriots, and as they had a few thousand stands of arms and two small pieces of artillery, it was very important that a landing should be made in as safe a place as possible upon the island.

Bidding adieu to their island friends, and leaving one of his crew to remain with Hill, as he had promised him, Mordaunt went aboard the Hornet; and soon after the trim privateer left the basin, and as it was a dark stormy night, the island was soon lost to view.

"I never thought it," sighed Dalton to himself, as he stood and gazed back in the direction of the island.

"Never thought what, West?" asked Edwardo, who had overheard his remarks.

"That I would ever be in love, and with a woman," disconsolately assured Dalton.

"Is the man mad?" Edwardo questioned humorously.

"I believe he is, for I certainly am not myself, to fall in love with a woman that doesn't care a fig for me."

"I verily believe you are in love with May Hill, West."

"You are right; and, what is more, I told her so, and she said she was sorry, and such like. As if there was any one else for her to marry! She'll be an old maid, yet."

"Well, is that so terrible?" asked Edwardo.

"I should think it was, judging from an old maiden aunt of mine. She was a crossed grained old girl, who had been disappointed in love—like myself—and not being in good health, the doctor recommended exercise for her. She followed his advice and exercised on me, and I assure you she spanked me so much that I got the credit of being the politest child in the neighborhood. I was always standing up when people were around. Why, bless me, Ed, I wouldn't

find much pleasure in sitting down after she had taken a dose of the medicine prescribed by that doctor—exercise on me."

"But, I am in love;" and leaving Edwardo laughing at his ludicrous sorrow, he went below to turn in and dream of May Hill.

As the Hornet dashed up towards Portland, and passed the forts, Edwardo, who was the officer of the deck, heard a splash in the water, and glancing over the side saw the head and shoulders of a man pass rapidly astern.

"Man overboard!" he sung out, in a loud voice, and springing to the helm, he brought to the schooner in an instant.

A boat was lowered, a crew sprung into it and pulled rapidly to where the arm had last been seen.

After a short search something was pulled into the boat, and upon the searchboat regaining the side of the schooner, the cruiser once more put upon her course and stood out to sea.

Dalton had gone into the boat after the man, and upon his return stepped up to Mordaunt, who had heard the cry of Edwardo, and hastened upon deck, saying a few words to him in a low tone.

"Go into the cabin, sir, and await my coming!" Captain Mordaunt commanded sternly, to the rescued seaman, who, with dripping clothes, stood near. The man quickly obeyed the order.

"Edwardo, you and Dalton come down with me into the cabin. Where are Duke and the other officers?" he asked.

"They are in the cabin, sir," answered Bueno.

"Very well. Brinkley, see that the schooner is kept upon her present course, and if you sight any steamers, call me."

"Ay, ay, sir," and Mordaunt went below.

His officers were all assembled in the cabin, and the seaman, who was no other than De Vega, stood by the companion way.

Taking a seat, Mordaunt gazed a moment upon the man before him, and then said:

"De Vega, why did you spring overboard?"

De Vega started and turned pale when he saw that he was recognized and said, solemnly:

"I wished to get ashore."

"Give me those papers you have about you, sir."

"I have none."

"Mr. Duke, go on deck and bring down the two life preservers that this man had around him."

Duke left the cabin and shortly returned, bringing two life preservers, one of which had a package tied up in oiled silk sewed to it.

Opening the package Mordaunt took out papers containing a complete sketch of his plans, and letters, purporting to be written by himself to the Cuban Junta, telling them to inform the bearer, personally, regarding their secret movements.

In fact the spy had schemed cunningly, —had concocted a perfect system of forgery to aid him in defeating the plans of the Patriot.

The officers read the papers over with mingled feelings of revenge and surprise at the skill with which they were executed.

One among them was a paper detailing the plan for the capture of the schooner.

He was to inform the Cuban Junta that their rendezvous on the coast was found out, and they were to send a band of Patriots to another place while he, De Vega, was to take a party of a hundred Spaniards to the rendezvous agreed upon with Mordaunt, and, boarding the schooner as Cubans, take possession of it and hang the officers and men.

"De Vega, you are a finished scoundrel," and the cruel smile came over Mordaunt's face, which he always wore when he was very angry and deeply moved.

"Mr. Dalton, hand me that pistol from the drawer in the desk behind you, if you please," ordered Mordaunt.

Dalton placed in his commander's hand a long single barreled duelling pistol, and holding it up to De Vega, Mordaunt asked:

"Do you know this pistol, De Vega?"

The man made no reply, and Mordaunt continued:

"The day after I was shot at on the island, Miss Hill found this pistol in the woods at the spot from which the shot was fired. It has engraved on it the name of De Vega. De Vega, were you the man who sought my life?"

All present were spellbound at the revelation.

"You shipped upon this vessel, and then attempted desertion, and that is punishable with death," continued the Captain. "You attempted the life of your commander. Of that base act I forgive you, although its penalty, in any navy of the world, would be death. You attempted to betray your officers and fellow-seamen, and have them executed, and have come aboard as a spy. Death is the penalty for that."

Mordaunt had spoken in a low, quiet tone, and not a sound had been heard in the cabin. All felt the solemnity of the scene.

The wretched spy hung his head, and when each time the word death had been spoken by his Captain he shuddered and moaned slightly, but when called a spy he said quickly:

"I am no spy, Captain Mordaunt; I am a United States detective."

"You are not a citizen of the United States, but of Cuba, and to that country you have proved yourself to be a traitor and have endeavored to stain its infant flag with the blood of your fellow-countrymen."

"I am a United States detective, and you dare not injure me!"

"You are an enlisted seaman aboard my vessel, and I dare do anything here. The United States has no claim upon me nor upon my vessel, and it is not likely any protection will be given you, a spy, a spy under the pay of Spanish gold and the cloak of a detective."

A groan escaped from De Vega that proved that hope had died—that his hours were numbered.

Now, De Vega, I shall pronounce your doom.

"At sunrise, to-morrow, you are to be shot dead, upon the charges of being a spy, of attempted assassination, of attempted betrayal of this ship and crew, and attempted desertion—which last you would have accomplished, and that would have led, no doubt, to the success of your other plans, had not Lieutenant Valiente discovered you when you sprang overboard."

"Thus you must suffer death, and may God have mercy upon your base soul!"

A perfect howl of anguish pierced the cabin and was heard by the crew on deck. The condemned man threw himself upon his knees, and holding his hands in supplication to Mordaunt, begged for mercy.

The Cuban Captain was very pale; his teeth were set; a strong feeling affected him; but no sign of mercy showed in his eyes, and De Vega felt that he asked in vain for pardon.

"I have but done my duty, De Vega, and you must die! Lieutenant Dalton, send the master-at-arms here, with a file of men, and have this man ironed and placed under guard."

"Yes, sir," but the cheerful smile that always shone on the Lieutenant's face was gone, and he arose sadly to obey the command.

De Vega was ironed and carried forward, while his shrieks for mercy, mingled with his curses against Mordaunt, went far across the waters.

On sped the beautiful schooner over the waves, while her officers and crew in solemn silence attended to their duties, their thoughts upon the prisoner who was to die upon the morrow.

CHAPTER XXII.
AN EXECUTION AT SEA.

As daylight approached the wind died away, and when the first ray of dawn broke not a breath of air was stirring, and the huge sail flapped about as the schooner quietly rose and fell upon the beaming ocean.

"Becalmed! A strange day for a deed of violence," said Mordaunt, as he ascended to the deck and glanced around him.

Suddenly the roll of the drum was heard, and the men began to assemble amidship to witness the execution. All wore a grave look, for during the whole night the groans of the condemned man had been borne to their ears, and they felt sorry that one of their number was doomed to die.

The officers came upon the deck one by one. All were dressed in full uniform and wore their side arms. Edwardo had visited De Vega and had endeavored to impress him with the consolations of religion, but the man refused his kind offers and desired to be left alone in his misery, so the Lieutenant walked away from him.

The rattle of muskets was then heard, and a dozen men were detailed to become the executioners. The muskets were handed to them as they answered to their names. Six of the guns were loaded with balls, the other six bearing only a blank cartridge, that those who fired might not know which one had sent the fatal ball into the heart of the condemned. All being in readiness, Edwardo advanced to Mordaunt as he stood near the wheel, with the other officers around him, and said, while he touched his hat:

"All is ready, sir."

"Very well; bring out the prisoner!"

In obedience to the order, Edwardo went forward and presently De Vega was brought aft, between a file of men, his wrists ironed.

His face was ghastly pale, and he could not raise his head, but looked down upon the deck, while he trembled so violently that he could hardly stand.

Once only he raised his head, as he came forward, and that was to cast a quick, searching glance in Mordaunt's face, as if to once more supplicate him for pardon, but the face was immobile, and in his eyes there shone no mercy.

As Mordaunt took off his cap and stepped forward the silence was oppressive, and every eye, except the prisoner's, was riveted upon him.

In his clear, tenor-like tones, the cruiser Captain spoke:

"My men, you see in this prisoner a Cuban who has turned against his countrymen now struggling for freedom against Spain, and as a traitor to his native land has arrayed himself with her enemies.

"When I was preparing to fit out my vessel, I met him in New York. He endeavored to entrap me there, and I then found out that he was in the pay of Spain as a spy. When last in New York I shipped this man as a seaman, for I did not recognize him with his hair and beard cut off, and took him aboard the schooner with me.

"I now have proof that the man who attempted my life stands before you as a prisoner. I also have proof that, when passing out of the harbor of Portland, he sprang overboard, with two life-preservers around him, to swim ashore, and with forged letters he had with him, to win the confidence of the Cuban Junta, and by a plan of his own to board and take the schooner when she landed at a point for which I am now steering.

"Had he succeeded, all of us would have been executed by the Spaniards, beyond a doubt.

"For his attempted desertion from a vessel on which he had enlisted, he makes the plea that he is a United States detective; but that plea is no excuse or palliation even for his crime of playing

"Upon these accusations against this man, sufficiently and clearly proven, I have determined that he shall die, and—"

"Oh, my God, Captain Mordaunt, spare me!" broke, in heartrending accents, from the prisoner as he attempted to clasp his manacled hands.

A deeper shade of pallor spread over Mordaunt's face, as De Vega thus appealed to him, but he continued in an unmoved voice,

"And that I may feel satisfied in my own mind that my judgment against him is not unjust, I wish any officer or man of this ship who thinks to the contrary to speak out now."

And the Captain folded his arms and glanced over his crew.

"Have mercy upon me! have mercy! Speak, some of you, and he will spare me! Think! A life, a soul, is in your hands! My death will kill my poor, poor mother.

"Some of you, officers—some of you, comrades, speak for mercy for me!"

And the poor wretch fell upon his knees, while the tears streamed from his bloodshot eyes.

The officers and crew were greatly moved and many a stern eye was moist with pity, but all gazed upon their young commander, and many in their hearts hoped that he would be merciful.

A moment's silence; then the prisoner raised his eyes to Mordaunt's and slowly arose to his feet.

Frank Mordaunt met the gaze unmoved. His eyes were calm, as he looked at the man before him.

"Captain Mordaunt, hear me," began De Vega, in tremulous tones, and men and officers gathered closer to catch his words.

"You have condemned me to die, to go out from this bright and beautiful world, and with crime in my heart, and a curse on my lips to face my God! Look! there rises into life the beautiful sun. Must the sun of my life, now set in gloom, in anguish, as a condemned felon, this calm and glorious day? Must I die, Captain Mordaunt?" and the spy turned appealingly to the commander.

The commander's face was like marble and almost as immovable as came the answer, firmly and distinctly:

"De Vega, you must die."

A groan of anguish and the head dropped forward upon his heart, and that groan was echoed by all on the vessel.

Brinkley led the prisoner to the stand and had his arms firmly tied behind him.

De Vega was placed upon the raised platform which had been erected for the execution.

His head still drooped forward as if fully realizing that there was no hope for mercy for him in this world.

He asked for a crucifix, that he might kiss it before he died.

Edwardo quickly sprang forward and placed his own crucifix to his lips, and De Vega thanked him over and over again, as he kissed fervently the sacred symbol of his religion.

"Now I realize the enormity of my crime, Edwardo—that I was going to deprive you all of the life I love so much. You remember, Edwardo, how often as boys we have hunted and fished together in the woods and brooks of our native island. I was an innocent boy then, and crime had not entered into my heart and driven all good out.

"Now I must die, and when you are again in Cuba, when the crash of war has ceased to echo in our mountains and the silver streams and the green swards are no longer tinged with blood, you will return to your childhood's home and roam over the scenes we both loved so dearly: then think, Edwardo, of your old companion and forgive and forget the wrong he has done you!"

"See my mother and comfort her in her old age, and tell her not how I died, for it would break her kind old heart, and cause a new mound in the village churchyard to know that her boy died as it is my fate to die.

"Ask also, when I am gone, Captain Mordaunt to forgive me as fully as I do him."

"Captain Mordaunt! Frank! pardon, please pardon this man's life!" burst forth Edwardo.

All gathered closer and looked at Mordaunt.

Every word De Vega had spoken had been listened to breathlessly by the crew, and one and all now asked for his pardon, but the stern face remained unchanged, as the Captain remarked:

"Lieutenant Valiente, the man must die!"

No other word was spoken, and as if the thoughts of his childhood had inspired him and given him new courage, De Vega raised himself proudly, and with a firm step ascended the platform, and facing around said:

"Captain Mordaunt, you have been merciful in allowing me to die this death, instead of by hanging from the yard-arm. Now I have a favor to ask of you. Let my arms be untied and I will promise to die as a man should, facing my executioners."

"Unbind his arms, Brinkley," ordered Mordaunt, and then turning to his Lieutenant, he continued:

"Edwardo, you need not give the order of execution, I will relieve you."

"Thank you, Frank!" and Edwardo's face showed how glad he was to be relieved from that sad duty, while De Vega bowed and said:

"I thank you also, Captain Mordaunt."

"Form your line, master-at-arm! Is all ready?"

"I am ready!" answered the doomed man, and Brinkley replied at the same time:

"Ay, ay, sir; all ready!"

Then, in a loud, stern voice to the men who stood ready in line:

"Attention, platoon!"

"Shoulder arms!"

"Make ready!"

"Take aim!"

"Fire!"

A crash of musketry followed.

The spy fell forward on his face, his heart pierced by half a dozen bullets.

The body was soon sewed in a hammock, cannon balls were attached to the feet, and without a prayer, all that was mortal of the spy De Vega was consigned to the ocean.

As if anxious to flee from the fatal spot, the Hornet spread her white sails to catch a light wind that was springing up, and glided silently away from the tragic scene, over the blue waters.

Edwardo at first had been much pained at Frank's refusal to spare the life of De Vega, but after the execution was over, and the officers had conversed upon the matter, he agreed, with the others, that their Captain had acted rightly, for had he spared the man the scoundrel that he had proven himself to be might have been again guilty of evil doing, and caused them much trouble. His life being in danger, he was willing to make any promise, but the moment he was free he would have been revengeful.

He was a dangerous man, and it was best to be rid of him.

So the officers thought, as they sat around the mess table and talked the matter over, and one and all decided that Captain Mordaunt had acted with justice, and they were glad he had remained firm, under the supplicating entreaties of the doomed man, and the request of Edwardo for pardon.

It was agreed, therefore, in the mess room to draw up some resolutions, sustaining their commander's conduct, and after signing them to send it to him. Although he had not spoken of the execution since he gave the order to fire the fatal volley, they all well knew that he felt the terrible ordeal keenly.

The men also had their chats over the matter, and they also sustained their commander. His conduct proved to them his unbending will, and if there had been one man in that crew who had anticipated rebellion to Mordaunt's authority or course, he no longer held such determination, for he was conquered.

Mordaunt was standing near the wheel, the third day after the execution, looking out upon the crew, and the schooner was making ten knots an hour upon her trip southward, when Edwardo came up and handed him a large-sized letter addressed in his name.

He took it, broke the seal, and read its contents, and then said quickly:

"Edwardo, I thank you and your fellow-officers for this act of justice. You were all governed by the heart, not the head, and I had to remain firm, no matter how my feelings might have prompted otherwise.

"I hold in the command of this schooner a fearful responsibility. We are upon a trackless ocean with no haven of rest, no port where our lonely flag will be greeted and welcomed. We are exiles from all lands except our own struggling country, which, as yet, cannot receive or protect us, and to me you all look for protection. I did but an act of inexorable justice, and to tell you now that I intend to keep order and discipline aboard my vessel, and punish disobedience and crime if I have to sacrifice every officer and man! Some time we will talk this matter over together, Edwardo, and you will then see what are the extenuating circumstances in my case, which are not yet understood.

"Now go to the officers and express to them my thanks," and Mordaunt walked forward.

After this cheerfulness came upon the ship; laugh and song were again heard, and gloom and regret found no longer abiding place upon the Hornet.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AGAIN ON THE FAITHFUL ISLE.

Upon the evening of the fifteenth day after leaving Hill's Island, the schooner stood in towards the Florida coast, and anchored near the mouth of a small river which emptied its waters into the ocean.

Edwardo went ashore with a dozen men, and in an hour returned to report that the Patriots, a hundred in number, were all assembled, and ready with arms and stores to come on board the schooner as soon as night fell.

Making a slight tack, Mordaunt carried the cruiser closer in to land, and anchored almost in the shadow of the overhanging trees which bordered the banks of the river.

The four boats were then sent ashore, and in a short while returned crowded with men. After a few trips all the Patriot recruits, and their stores, ammunition, and two pieces of artillery, were safely on board the Hornet, which again spread her sails and turned her prow for Cuba.

"The vessel carries her load nobly, Edwardo," said Mordaunt, as he gazed with pride upon his vessel, which, though deeply laden, ploughed through the waves with an eight-knot breeze bearing her towards the land which she was so faithfully nearing.

"Yes, and I pray we may make a landing without being caught in any heavy weather," answered Edwardo.

"Yes, heavy weather would be truly awful with all these landlubbers aboard, Captain," remarked Dalton, who was standing near.

"I thought I had witnessed the saddest sight in the world when I saw a seasick Frenchman; but I was mistaken—begging your pardon Vallente, I had not then seen a seasick Cuban! Why, the poor devils seem to have a successful way of grasping all the misery that flesh is heir to, at every bound of the ship. Oh! it was awful!" averred Dalton, grimacing comically.

"I believe you are right, Dalton," said Edwardo, "for men of similar constitution, or I should say organizations, such as Frenchmen, the Spanish race, and Italians, are more likely to become seasick than other nationalities, and to suffer more with it; at least, such has been my experience."

"Well, then."

"Blow gently, ye fragrant winds, I pray, for we have among this band of heroes that boarded us, Cubans, Spaniards, Mexicans, Italians, and French mixed. Good night! I am going to pray for fair weather to continue!" and as usual a laugh followed Dalton's departure.

The third night after leaving the Florida coast the Hornet was stealing cautiously in towards a small and desolate harbor on the island of Cuba, where the Junta had directed Mordaunt to make a landing, and as she gradually neared the shore, sail after sail was taken in, until at length she ceased to move, and her anchor was noiselessly lowered into the water.

"Listen," said Mordaunt in low tones, and the distant notes of a bugle floated across the water. "That is the signal; they have seen us come in. Rudolph, you and De Silver remain on board, with a dozen men, while I take the crew and land first, in the boats. I am a little afraid of an attack. The boats will be at once sent back for the recruits. I wish the officers with me, and the surgeon must also accompany the boats.

"Is all ready, Vallente?"

"Yes, and the men are all in the boats," and with muffled oars the crew of the Hornet moved towards the beach.

As they approached, a body of men could be seen through the darkness drawn up in line on the beach, and giving orders for the men to rest on their oars Mordaunt placed his hands to his mouth and gave a long shrill whistle. After a moment's hesitation, it was answered by a voice, that hailed:

"Boat ahoy! Cuba and the Republic!"

"All right! Give way, men!" and as Mordaunt sprang on shore his hand was grasped by Antonio Nunoz, the Cuban who had been left in command of the company of which Edwardo had been elected the Captain.

"Mordaunt, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you once more on Cuban soil, and you also, Edwardo," and as Nunoz recognized his old associates he warmly grasped the hand of each of them.

"Send the boats back after the men and ammunition," ordered Mordaunt, and as they departed he continued: "How is the struggle going on here, Tony? We have heard good accounts of you. You are now a Colonel, I believe?"

"Yes, Frank; I command a regiment now.

"We are still fighting against great odds, and need arms and ammunition sorely; but I believe we will yet come out all right," answered Antonio. "Edwardo, I was at Buena Vista for a short while last week. All are well there, and Senorita Nita remains with your mother and sister, since the death of her father.

"Buena Vista has not suffered any as yet, as Colonel Aldano of the Spanish forces has been encamped near, and will allow no soldiers to trespass upon the grounds. He has been a good friend of your family, although he is one of the most gallant officers and hardest fighters the Spaniards have.

"I met him under a flag of truce the other day, and he asked particularly after you and Frank."

This was good news to the two friends, and Frank congratulated himself upon his midnight meeting with Major Aldano.

Soon the boats came ashore again, loaded with men, and after three hours' hard work the cannon, arms, and stores were all landed from the privateer.

Nunoz, with his escort of two hundred men, now increased by his hundred recruits from the schooner, started upon his inland march to rejoin the army, which was thirty miles in the interior, bearing with him letters from Mordaunt and his officers to their friends at home.

Hardly had Mordaunt placed his foot upon the deck of his vessel when the rapid reports of firearms and yells of combatants were borne to him upon the breeze.

"By Heavens! Nunoz has been attacked!"

"To the boats, men!" and, springing into his own launch he was rapidly followed by the men.

"Edwardo, take the first cutter with ten men; you, Duke, take the second cutter with the same number, and, Dalton, come on with the third and your complement of men.

"De Silver, take command of the schooner, and call the men to the guns as soon as you set sail. Have all in readiness to leave here at a moment's notice. If we are pursued to our boats, protect us with your guns."

Mordaunt uttered his orders rapidly but distinctly and with coolness, and as he gave the last command shoved off from the schooner.

"Pull with a will, men!" he urged.

Soon the boats grounded upon the beach and all sprang ashore.

"One man remain in each boat, and shove off fifty feet from shore," he called out, and then continued: "This gives us forty-four fighting men, all told. Now, come on!"

The firing from the direction of the road that Nunoz had taken now became very heavy, and the boom of artillery mingled with the reports of the muskets and pistols.

"Antonio is having warm work of it; we must hasten. On, men, on!" and at a double-quick the men approached the scene of the contest.

"Give it to them, Nunoz! We are here to aid you!" called out Mordaunt, as he came upon the spot and saw that the Spaniards, in largely superior numbers, had attacked the band under Colonel Nunoz, who, with their faces turned towards the enemy, and their backs against their wagons, were fighting heavily, and cheered by their gallant leader, were dealing death upon the Spanish lines.

"Now upon them, men!" and with a loud cheer Mordaunt and his crew were in the midst of the surprised Spaniards.

Desperate, indeed, was the combat then. The crew of the Hornet pressed around their leader as he cut his way through the ranks of the enemy, while Nunoz, seeing the diversion in his favor, brought up his men in columns, ordering the lately arrived Cubans to defend the wagons from any flank attack, and thus strongly supported the impetuous advance of Mordaunt and his seamen, who were wielding their deadly cutlasses with terrible effect.

"These men fight like devils. Look at Mordaunt, how he lays about him!" said Colonel Nunoz to his second in command, who rode up for orders.

"Follow me, men!" again rang out Mordaunt's clear tones; but the enemy were pressing hard upon them now, and for an instant their advance was checked.

"Now, Spaniards, do your duty!" broke in trumpet tones, clearly heard above the din.

Mordaunt looked at the speaker, and not thirty feet from him, with his sword drawn, the reins of his bridle tightly grasped in his hand, and coolly smoking a cigar, sat Colonel Aldano, for he had been promoted to that rank.

His presence inspired his men, and their pressure began to force the Patriots back, when Mordaunt's voice again urged the Cubans on.

Colonel Aldano heard the voice, glanced in its direction, their eyes met, and each saluted with his sword, and again their voices were heard cheering on their men.

Springing forward with a rallying cry, Dalton fell; then staggered to his feet, only to come down to his knees; a moment thus, and then he sank upon the ground, saying in his old joking way:

"They have done for me, Frank. Send one of the Dons with me, or I'll be lonely."

The demon in the young privateer Captain was aroused; his dear friend and chum had fallen; his eyes blazed as he sprang forward, and with one blow of his cutlass struck down a Spanish officer, at the same time crying out:

"Men, they have killed your Lieutenant! Avenge Dalton!"

On dashed the men, with a yell of rage, and, unable to withstand the impetuous seamen, the Spaniards gave way and were forced back, while Nunoz came on, and the entire Patriot force was thrown against the now broken Spanish line.

In vain did Colonel Aldano endeavor to rally his troops, and risk his life with the greatest recklessness. He was thrown back, with his whole line, and with another loud yell the Cubans mingled with their enemies, who, thoroughly demoralized, broke and fled in all directions, while their officers anathematized them loudly for their cowardice.

The field was won, and the Patriots returned to their wagon train.

"Nunoz, we have gained the fight; but brave Dalton is dead, and I have lost more than half of my men," and Mordaunt gazed sadly at the wreck around him, which was lit up by the light of a burning building near, and a few wagons that had been set on fire.

"We have lost heavily, Captain Mordaunt, and I have to thank you and your men for saving us, for we would have been annihilated, had it not been for your timely arrival."

"You have saved the wagon trains to Cuba, and we have captured as many more wagons; for, look, the Spaniards have fled and left all in our hands," and Nunoz pointed to the spoils.

Determined not to take his wounded with him, Mordaunt had them placed in ambulances to accompany Nunoz to the Patriot camp, for now that there was no longer any firing, far off could be heard the boom of a minute gun, which Colonel Nunoz said was a signal that aid was being sent to them, for Judan had heard the combat, and at once hastened to the relief of his detachment.

By the light of a torch Mordaunt searched for poor Dalton, and found him, cold in death, with a smile that was painful to look at, resting upon the handsome, boyish face, and the hand grasping firmly the sword that he had wielded so well.

"I will bury him there beneath that tree, Duke; and if ever you or I live to see the end of this war, he must be taken to his home in America."

"You will remember this, Edwardo, if you should be spared and Duke and I should fall."

"I will, Frank."

A grave was dug and with no covering for his form, and his sword still grasped in his hand, the body of Wesley Dalton, a short while before the bright and gay young officer, was placed in his cold bed in a foreign land; where the soft winds of Cuba will sing the requiem—

"O'er the grave where a hero is buried."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOUR AGAINST ONE—A WOUNDED CAPTAIN

Slowly the privateer sailed away from the low, dark line that marked the island as if loath to leave poor Dalton and her thirty seamen "sleeping the sleep that knows no waking."

Mordaunt stood upon the deck of his schooner gazing sadly upon the shore as it grew more and more indistinct in the distance, and could one have seen the expression of utter anguish stamped upon his face he would not have called him heartless—would not have believed him the man who, without apparent emotion, had given the order that sent De Vega into eternity.

"Poor, poor West! A truer man never lived! May the earth rest lightly above your grave! One by one we are called away, and ere long it may be our turn."

"Cuba, you are fatal to those I love. Herbert Henriques and Dalton are gone, Senor Gonzalez also, and dozens of my seamen."

"To-night I have lost heavily—Dalton and thirty poor fellows in their graves; Edwardo and Duke wounded, and myself, too; but it is the fate and fortune of war," and he glanced at his arm, which was in a sling.

"Ha, Edwardo, I hope you do not suffer much," and Mordaunt cast off the look of gloom from his face and greeted his lieutenant cheerfully.

"No, my wound was slight, and since the surgeon has dressed it I hardly feel it. Duke is not much hurt, either. The wound is a sabre cut on the shoulder, given by that brave fellow who commanded the Spaniards," said Edwardo.

"That man was Colonel Aldano, Edwardo, and the Spaniards would never have fought as they did had he not been present."

"That was Aldano, then? A gallant fellow, and a magnificent looking man. I saw him turn his horse aside to keep from riding over the wounded."

"Yes; that is the nature of the man, a gentleman born!"

"Sail ho!" came from the man at the masthead.

"Where away?" called out Mordaunt.

"Dead ahead, sir."

"What do you make of her?"

"A large three-masted steamer, sir."

"The Treuca, by all that's holy."

"Now, here is a pickle," said Edwardo, gazing into Frank's face.

"Sail ho!" again came from the lookout.

"Another steamer in the wake of the other, sir."

"Now blow, good winds, or the Cuban cruiser Hornet must find her grave with her colors flying," exclaimed Mordaunt. The other officers had assembled upon the deck.

"Well, Duke, I am glad to see you up; hope you will not suffer much from your wound," and Mordaunt greeted his lieutenant cheerily.

"We are in a nice pickle now; not one-third of a crew; you, Edwardo, and myself all wounded, and these Spanish vessels coming down upon us."

"Yes, we are in a beehive, I fear," Duke assented.

"Beat to quarters, Edwardo, and I'll arrange the crew as best I can at their guns."

"Thank goodness, here comes the wind! Keep her off a few points."

"Sail ho!"

"What, another? That's right, my man! Keep it up, and you'll find the whole Spanish navy. Duke, I—"

"Sail ho!"

"The devil! I was going to say, Duke, that I don't like this Cuban coast so much as I thought I did," but, as the dangers thickened around the young commander, his face brightened and he looked the very picture of contentment.

"Ahoy, there!" and Mordaunt called out to the man at the masthead. "Take the bearings of the fleet you have discovered, and come to the deck. We need your services at the guns."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The main-topman descended to the deck and, approaching his commander, in a few moments gave all the information he had gleaned regarding the sails discovered from his lookout.

"Old Boreas is still our friend, Duke! See how the wind freshens," said Edwardo, "and be contented. We may make those fellows feel our calibre yet, if it comes to a hard blow."

The steamers, four in number, were all visible from the deck, and two of them seemed to be making all haste to get into a harbor, on the coast, to avoid the approaching tropic storm.

"Those are two gunboats, Ed, and you'd think they had a Jonah on board the way they make for land. The others are both war vessels, one of them a rapid sailor, the other an old tug, which will yet get her bottom knocked out on this coast."

"There, that is for us," and a shot from the leading steamer flew across the Hornet's bow.

"Be polite, De Silver, and return the compliment," and a shot from the pivot gun, amidships, answered the steamer's signal fire.

Flash after flash from the guns of the schooner and steamer lit up the ocean,

and coming with them was the loud artillery of heaven.

The flash of the lightning cast into insignificance the flashes of the guns, as did the deep roar of the thunders drown the booming of the cannon.

The storm of the elements quickly became so terrific that both vessels had to give up their artillery duel to battle with the winds and waves.

The cruiser-privateer had lost three men killed, and sustained a few injuries, while as to the damage done the steamer Mordaunt had no way of estimating.

With a few men still at the forward gun, and the remainder of the crew attending to the working of the vessel, the Hornet bounded about in the whirlpool of waters, and the driving spray almost blinded her crew.

"Ahoy, the schooner! What schooner is that?" called out a hoarse voice from the ocean, and the dark mass of a large steamer swept past with her guns run out, and her men at quarters.

"The old tub we saw, as I live! Answer with a shot!" cried Mordaunt. Springing into the rigging with his trumpet he then answered the hail from the steamer with:

"The independent Republic of Cuba!"

A shot at the same moment was hurled from the forward gun at the Spanish steamer, and the schooner's crew gave a long, loud cheer.

A terrific broadside followed from the steamer, and the iron hail crashed through the little schooner's rigging and bulwarks, and Mordaunt was hurled, apparently lifeless, to the deck.

"Carry Captain Mordaunt to the cabin, two of you."

"Put her before the wind, helmsman!"

"Come aft here, men, and man this stern gun and turn it on that vessel!" and Edwardo, now in command, issued his orders in a rapid, firm manner that showed his nerve and his keen sense of the danger the vessel was in.

Tearing through the water, with some of her hamper dangling, having been cut away by the broadside from the steamer, the Hornet sped on, defiantly firing her stern gun at her enemy, which was soon lost to sight in the darkness.

"Duke, clear away the wreck and put the schooner off for the northern rendezvous. Crowd her with all the sail she will carry, for we must be out of sight by day, and we have only an hour or two more," and leaving the deck, Edwardo descended to the cabin to look after his wounded commander.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ISLAND QUEEN TO THE RESCUE.

The wind whistled and howled around the rocky cliff on the northern part of Hill's island home, and even the usually still waters in the basin were stirred by the fury of the storm that was raging, some two weeks after the incidents related in the last chapter.

Standing upon the promontory, her hair streaming in the wind, was May Hill, while near her, gazing seaward, was her father.

"Look, father! it is the Cuban privateer schooner! See! You behold her three masts!" cried the girl excitedly, while she pointed far out over the raging waters, to where a three-masted schooner, with very little sail set, was battling with the waves.

"You are right, my daughter, it is the Hornet; but it would be madness for Mordaunt to attempt to run into the basin in this storm. Yes, and she is crippled, too, for see, her main topmasts are gone!" and the old fisherman anxiously watched the schooner as she stood on towards the island.

"Hark!" The boom of the cannon was heard, and then another.

"Father, Mordaunt is not on that vessel. My God, can he be gone—hurt, perhaps killed?"

"Why May, why do you say that? Be quiet, child. They are only firing to let us know they are coming," answered Hill, soothingly, for he was pained to

see the wild, distressed look that came to his daughter's eyes.

"There it is again, father!" and again the sound of cannon was borne to their ears.

"Look, father, Mordaunt is not at the helm, for look at the course she takes. We must save them or they are lost!" and rushing wildly down the hill, May took the path to the basin, while her father slowly followed.

Arriving at the beach the hermit islander found his daughter in the little sloop, with the sail half up.

"Come, father! We have no time to lose!"

"May, we cannot, we dare not brave this storm," Hill protested.

"We *must*, father! and if you do not come, I will go *alone*!" and the firm face showed her purpose.

With a bound, Hill was by her side, and, taking the helm, he pushed the little sloop off. Feeling the wind, it moved swiftly towards the outlet of the basin.

After leaving that safe harborage, the sloop was caught by the high-running seas and strong wind and carried on out into the open sea, the fisherman expertly guiding her through the dangerous passages.

Not two miles off the Privateer schooner was visible, coming on toward the island, and Hill felt convinced, from the course she was on, that Mordaunt was not her pilot.

Standing up in the sloop, with one arm clasped around the mast, May Hill bent her eyes upon the schooner, and as she stood there, her dress and hair wet with the waves that dashed over her, she raised her eyes in prayer for the safety of him whom she so loved, and for the safety of those on board the vessel which she and her father were risking their own lives to save.

"Father, we will reach them!" she cried.

"I believe so, May; but the danger has but half commenced then," and the fisherman watched with most anxious eye both his little sloop and the schooner, the latter seeming almost unmanageable in the storm.

After minutes which seemed hours to May, they drew near the schooner, and the sloop having been discovered, the Hornet hove to to await her coming.

"Ha, Hill! Glad to see you! and you, Miss Hill! But why did you come out in such a storm?" called out Eduardo as the sloop swept by.

"To save the schooner! Where is Captain Mor-daunt?" cried the brave girl.

"Wounded and confined to the cabin!" answered the Lieutenant.

"Thank God it is no worse!" uttered by May was answered by an earnest amen from her father.

"Throw a line astern, Lieutenant, and I will grasp it as I tack. It is the only way I can reach you," and, putting the helm sharp down, Hill steered close in toward the stern of the schooner.

"Now, May, take the helm, and follow the schooner right in, and if—but no; we will be successful!" and dashing the spray or tears from his eyes, the fisherman stood on the deck of the sloop prepared to catch the rope thrown him.

With steady hand, May held the tiller, and with her eye fixed on the stern of the schooner, she steered the little craft so skillfully as almost to graze the planking. Then her father, seizing the rope, with a vigorous jump reached the Hornet's deck.

"Well done, Hill! Nobly done, Miss Hill!" yelled Eduardo to the heroine as her little craft rapidly dashed away, as three cheers were given for the brave girl!

"Now, Hill, the schooner is saved. But if you had not come I fear we would have been lost, for we have hardly any crew," and Eduardo once more got the vessel under way, while May and her little coaster led on towards the island.

Standing up in the sloop, with her long hair streaming in the wind, her hands grasping the tiller, and her eyes fixed upon the landmarks that should guide her course into the island basin, she made a lovely picture, and as the officers of the cruiser gazed upon her they could but wish that it would be their fortune to win a heart so brave, a spirit so proud!

On bounded the sloop, and coming in her wake was the privateer. The channel was soon entered, and then those on the privateer lost sight of the little vessel as it went into the basin. The Hornet quickly followed, and then, with another turn of the wheel, Hill brought the schooner round, and she rested in quiet water, safe from the stormy ocean outside, which, an hour before, had threatened all on board with a watery grave.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CRUISER CAPTAIN AS AN INVALID.

Anchoring the little sloop, May ran up to the ledge of rocks to which she knew the schooner would come, and as her father brought the vessel close alongside the sheer bank, she bounded aboard like an antelope, so graceful was the leap. All hands cheered again, but not noticing the demonstration, and paying no attention to Eduardo's greeting, she immediately inquired:

"Where is Captain Mordaunt? Is he seriously hurt? May I see him?"

Seeing her excitement and evidently painful suspense, the Lieutenant answered, encouragingly:

"He is below, Miss Hill. Don't look so worried. Now that he is safely here all will be well, I am sure."

"Thank God!" she murmured, fervently.

"And," added Eduardo, "I am going to request, Miss Hill, that Captain Mordaunt be moved up to the house and put under your care, for he will be so much more comfortable there."

"By all means, Mr. Valiente. I will go and have preparations made to receive him at once. Is he dangerously or seriously wounded?" and the anxious look on her face told Eduardo plainly enough how deeply May loved his commander.

"He was seriously wounded in the side from a piece of shell, but is now recovering, and is out of danger, but still very weak, as he had received a wound in the arm the same night, from which he lost much blood. And then, too, we had a rough run of it up here, and that was against him."

"I will arrange for his coming; so bring him as soon as you desire," and May, springing ashore, on the receiving ledge, hastened away.

Entering the cabin, Eduardo told Frank of their safe entry into the basin, and how it had been effected through the courage of May Hill, and that he must at once make up his mind to place himself under that young lady's care, as he was to be removed to the home of the islander.

At this moment Hill entered the state room, and after greeting Frank warmly, urged him to consent to being taken to his house. Not much entreaty was necessary, and ere long the wounded man was carried by four seamen up the steep pathway to Hill's home.

At the doorway May met Frank, and though she was very pale, and shocked at the wan face, pinched with suffering, that met her gaze, she smiled encouragingly and welcomed him once more to the island home.

A comfortable bed had been made up in the parlor, and into this the cruiser Captain was placed.

"I have had some practice nursing of late, Frank, for the seaman Hays, whom you left to aid father, has been laid up for some time with a broken arm," said May.

"And now," she continued, "here comes mother. She is to give you your

orders, which you are to obey. I know what they are, and shall insist upon your obedience."

Mrs. Hill was delighted to see her favorite back, but pained to see him so ill, and informed him that he was not to worry about his vessel, but to get well and let May nurse him as she had done years before when he had been shipwrecked.

"Now you must do just as I tell you in all things," she enjoined, and Frank having promised obedience, the nurse and patient seemed as if they would get along together without the slightest disagreement.

The days passed and Mordaunt was soon able to sit up. Then the old look began to come back into his face, at which his nurse more and more rejoiced and asked him about his being wounded.

She had never tired of listening to the crew of the schooner tell of their commander's courage, as they were sure to do when she was a listener, but now she wanted her hero, himself, to relate the story.

"Tell, me Frank, about your being wounded," she one day urged.

"I will May, if it will give you any pleasure to know the story," and Mordaunt told her all about the cruise of the privateer since she had left the island; of the execution of De Vega, the going into the Florida coast for the Cubans and of their landing in the island.

Then he spoke of the battle which followed, in which brave Dalton was killed, told her of the running fight his vessel had had with one of the steamers, and of his coming suddenly upon another and receiving the fatal broadside which struck him down, and killed two of his men. Of his pain, his fearful suffering, and the storms the schooner had met with, and of a wave boarding her and washing three of his men off into the ocean, how their death shrieks had come to him as he lay helpless in his cabin. He ended by saying: "May, my officers are a noble set of men. They have stood by me through all, and I know not how to repay them for their devotion to duty and for what they have done for me personally."

Weeks came and passed and Frank Mordaunt finally was again himself, a little pale and careworn perhaps, but the old sweet smile had come back to him and his eyes were bright as ever, and as May looked at him, she felt that he was far dearer than he had ever been in the days that were passed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AGAIN AFLOAT AND A NEW RECRUIT.

During Mordaunt's illness Eduardo had gone with the little schooner given to Hill to look up another crew for the privateer.

Duke and De Silver had accompanied him, and as he was anxious to get his men together and have them ready drilled by Mordaunt's recovery, he landed De Silver at Boston, to commence enlisting a crew, sent Duke to Philadelphia for the same purpose, and with two faithful seamen, who had accompanied him as the crew of the little schooner, he determined to go to New York.

After agreeing upon signals and places of meeting, as soon as the men were enlisted, Eduardo sailed from Boston to New York and anchored his little vessel, the third day after, in the Hudson River.

Giving the two sailors strict instructions regarding their conduct while they were in port, Eduardo went ashore and at once sought the office of the Junta.

To that body he made known his adventures, the successful landing of the expedition, and the defeat of the Spaniards on land; also the engagement of his vessel with the two Spanish men of war, of the damage done the schooner and of her severe losses in officers and men.

In return, he was informed that there was a large quantity of arms then in New York awaiting transportation to

Cuba, but that there was no way of sending them unless by the privateer schooner *Hornet*.

Edwardo at once determined to take them, and finding that he could get a good crew on a day's notice, he wrote to De Silver and decided to join him in New York.

"My little vessel will carry all the arms and supplies as well as the thirty Cubans you wish to accompany them; we can charter a freight steamer for the balance, and at once clear from this port for the rendezvous; then when the schooner reaches the coast of Cuba, we can run into the harbor in the night and send a messenger to the army to have an escort sent to the port shore, and after landing him, will put to sea again and return by a given time to land the arms.

"This is my plan, gentlemen," and the Junta at once acquiesced in it as most feasible. In less than a week after his arrival, Edwardo sailed from New York in the little craft that had brought him there, and headed for the rendezvous, followed by the freight schooner with men, the munitions of war, and under command of Duke.

A rapid run brought the vessel Edwardo commanded in sight of the Casco Bay Island, and seeing it approach, Mordaunt and May went out in the sloop and piloted it into the basin.

During the same day Duke arrived, and the work of transferring the cargo was commenced.

A full complement of men had been shipped for the schooner, and as all was in readiness for departure, the thirty Cubans who were to land with the arms were taken aboard and places assigned them. That done, Mordaunt gave orders to get under way.

"Where is May, Captain Hill?" asked Mordaunt.

"I do not know, Captain. I told her to be ready to say good-by when you left, but she commenced to cry, and ran off, so I suppose she feels too bad to come," answered the old fisherman, evidently distressed.

"Yes, I know she dislikes to see us leave. Now, Hill, I have something to say to you. You have in your basin the large schooner and the small one, both of which have been presented to me by the Cuban Government for my services.

"They are worth something, and in case I should be killed here is a paper which wills them all to May. The paper is witnessed, you see, by Edwardo and Duke."

"Oh, Captain; you—"

"Not a word of thanks, my friend. May is a noble girl and has stood by me through all, and this is but a proper return, provided I am slain.

"One of my officers, Duke, is really in love with her, and as he is a fine fellow I hope you will try and influence her to look upon him with a return of affection.

"I have said good-by to the madame and am sorry May is not visible, but perhaps it is better as it is.

"You have been a true friend to me, Hill, and if we never meet again, remember that I shall appreciate to my dying hour all that you have done.

"Good-by, now, and God bless you and your noble wife and daughter," and Frank pressed the hard hand of the fisherman, and springing into his boat was rowed rapidly aboard his vessel, which, under his guidance, stood out of the basin into the narrow channel, and then on the pathless ocean toward Cuba.

"Well, Edwardo, we are once more afloat; once more must mingle in the strife for the liberation of the ever beautiful isle and the Cuban Republic."

"Would that this war was over," and with a sigh Mordaunt turned and paced the deck of his trusty vessel, so swiftly plying to meet the perils sure to confront her and to test the courage and devotion of every man under his command.

Swiftly the *Hornet* pursued her south-

ern course, and with fair winds was rapidly nearing the ever-beautiful isle—the "Gem of the Antilles"—which then was in the throes and pangs of revolution.

Standing upon the deck were Captain Mordaunt and Edwardo, conversing. The former was saying:

"I noticed the boy the day after we left the island; he is a handsome fellow, hardly sixteen years of age, I should judge."

"Indeed, he is handsome, and he speaks Spanish well, too, although he is not of that tongue, evidently," answered Edwardo, and both he and Mordaunt continued to gaze upon a youth who was leaning over the low railing and glancing into the ocean as though watching, with deep interest, the wake left by the schooner.

Apparently the boy was about sixteen, and his golden hair hanging in short curls around his neck, his slender figure and drooping, sunlit eyes, gave him the appearance of a boy raised in wealth and unused to the hardships of sea-life.

But there was a manly expression about the mouth, and a certain active motion in the slight form which gave one the idea that, though pale, he had a strong frame, and would, when the test of nerve and courage came, do a full man's duty.

"His face is certainly very familiar to me, Ed, but for the life of me I can not say where I have met him."

"That is what puzzles me, for I certainly have seen him before," answered the Lieutenant.

"Come here, my boy!" called out Mordaunt, and, hearing the order, the youth's face flushed as he turned and walked with a quick step towards his commander. "What is your name, sir?"

"Harry March, sir," answered the youth, as he touched his cap.

"You came with the men from New York or Philadelphia?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you enlist as?"

"I was entered by Mr. Rudolph as ordinary seaman, sir."

"Have you been much at sea?"

"I have sailed considerable, sir, and think I understand by duties."

"I suppose you know that we are bound upon a dangerous enterprise?"

"I know that your vessel is called a pirate, Captain Mordaunt."

"You do, do you? And you wish to be a pirate, then?"

"No, no! I said called a pirate, but I know that she is not one, and that she is a vessel of war aiding Cuba."

"Where do you live, boy?"

"In Maine, sir!"

"On the coast?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is where you learned to be a sailor?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are rather young and slightly built to be thrown with rough seamen, March, and if you would prefer it, I will give you a place as cabin boy, where you will have lighter duties, and be less exposed."

The boy's eyes flashed with joy, but subduing the look, he answered:

"Thank you, Captain Mordaunt. I do not fear danger or exposure, but would prefer to go into the cabin, and will serve you faithfully."

"Well, Harry, go forward and tell Bueno I have taken you as cabin boy, and ask him to instruct you in the duties you will have to perform.

"I trust you will by your behavior fully sustain my interest in you."

"Thank you, sir. I will try to do my duty."

Raising his cap—which act let fall a mass of sunny curls around his shoulders—the handsome boy went forward to report to Bueno. That worthy received him graciously, and with pleasure, for he had noticed the youngster, and already had his eye on him, with the in-

tention of asking Captain Mordaunt to take him into the cabin as his aide de cuisine.

"Well, Frank, what do you think of your protegee?" asked Edwardo as Harry March went forward.

"He is a fine fellow, Ed, but I cannot make him out."

"His face bothers me with some by-gone resemblance to some one whom I have known; but I will soon be able to trace the likeness."

"I am equally bothered, but will also try and trace the likeness to the one whom he reminds me of."

"He is certainly intelligent beyond his years."

"Yes, and if I mistake not, he will yet rise to be an officer on board this vessel, for he has the nerve, if his face does not belie him."

And musing upon the handsome countenance of his protegee, as Edwardo called Harry, the Captain descended into the cabin, having been summoned to dinner by the newly appointed cabin boy.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE CAPTURE.

"Show the American revenue flag, Edwardo! That craft looks as though she wished to avoid us."

As the order of Captain Mordaunt was obeyed, the stranger, a large ship steering in the same direction as the privateer schooner, ran up the flag of Spain.

"Haul down that flag and run up the Stars and Stripes!" again called out Captain Mordaunt, and as the American flag unfolded to the breeze, he remarked:

"There is a chance for a prize, I think, Lieutenant Valiente. It would be quite a feather in our cap if we could capture that fellow."

The Spanish flag on board the merchantman was dipped in salute to the United States colors, and as it rose again to its place Captain Mordaunt gave the order, while he narrowly watched the ship through his glass:

"Beaf to quarters, Lieutenant, and run the Cuban colors up."

As the flag of the struggling and maiden republic was given to the winds, a great bustle was discernible upon the merchant ship. She was at once put upon her best sailing points, and all canvas crowded upon her.

The men being at quarters, and the schooner's course changed to the direction in which the Spanish ship was going, Frank had the *Hornet* crowded with canvas, and she darted after the game she had sprung like a literal sea-hound.

The large vessel, distant some three miles, and rushing over the waters pursued by the schooner, typified the noble stag fleeing from the small hound that hung upon his track and threatened him with his glistening teeth.

On flew the ship, which was full-rigged and a fine sailer, and in her wake came the Cuban privateer, foot by foot gaining upon the large adversary.

"We are gaining very little, Edwardo; set more sail, for the ship is crowding on all she will bear, and she goes well," observed Mordaunt. Both vessels began to crowd on more canvas, and, as a ten-knot breeze was blowing, their bows were almost buried in the waters.

"At this rate, Duke, that vessel will escape us."

"I never saw a better sailer. We must mend our pace, for if we cannot get near enough to stop her with our guns she will escape in the night, which will be on us in four hours," remarked Frank to Lieutenant Duke.

"She has now all she can carry, Captain, and the *Hornet* can hardly stagger under more," replied the Lieutenant, and hearing the remark Edwardo said:

"No more sail, or we will run her under, for she is nearly buried forward now, and I have had to call the men from the gun on the fore-castle."

"We must lighten her forward," answered Mordaunt; and, seeing that the schooner gradually increased her speed after the changes were made, he then ordered:

"Bring from the hold all the extra spars and sails, and rig them amidships and aft, so that they will draw. I will overtake that ship or run the Hornet under with all sail set."

The officers and men knew their commander, and, though dreading in their hearts thus crowding the schooner, they did not show it upon their faces, but instantly went to work and rigged all the canvas that could be made to draw.

Feeling the increased weight of sail, the privateer ploughed deep into the sea, and sent from her sharp bows waves of spray as she cut through the water. Her immense spread of sail began to force her ahead with renewed speed, while every eye but her commander's watched with anxiety the headlong rush of the vessel.

Glancing aloft and around him at the clouds upon clouds of white canvas and her white hull, Mordaunt said:

"She is, indeed, a splendid craft. Her snowy sails cause her to look like a flying cloud—a cloud that ere long will break in storm upon that ship."

"She goes like a sea-bird, Frank, and looks very beautiful, but I fear for her; you see how she staggers and trembles."

"All right, Edwardo. She will stand it! Ah, see how rapidly we are overhauling that vessel now! In a few moments we will be able to use our forward guns. Have the men at their places."

Edwardo went forward to obey the order, and though almost blinded with spray, which broke over them, the crew of the gun and their officers, he found every man on the ready. In a few moments Mordaunt called out through his trumpet:

"Fire a shot and give her a hint to come to."

"Aye, aye, sir!" and the smoke of the cannon was lost in the spray that burst over its mouth; but the iron messenger rushed shrieking upon its course and plunged into the ocean ahead of the ship, which, in the last half hour, the Hornet, with her increased spread of canvas, had rapidly gained upon.

"Give her another, Lieutenant, for that has done no good," and again the rifled gun's threatening tones warned the ship to come to.

Although the crew of the schooner could not see the effect of the shot upon the flying ship, they felt assured that it had done some damage, for there appeared to be a great commotion on board, and, then, lowering the Spanish flag, the large vessel came to and awaited the approach of the privateer cruiser.

"Take in all unnecessary sail, Edwardo! We have her now!" and a look of triumph gleamed in Mordaunt's eye while the crew gave cheer after cheer to express their delight.

Going aboard the ship, Mordaunt found it to be a large merchantman loaded with a rich freight from Spanish ports and bound to Savannah.

She had, besides her officers, a crew of twenty men, and her Captain believed he would have escaped from the privateer had not the last shot fired seriously injured his vessel by striking her below the water line and causing her to leak badly.

The crew of the merchantman was sent aboard the schooner, and after the boats had also transferred to the Hornet all that was of real value to the Cubans, the vessel was set on fire, just as darkness settled upon the sea.

Leaving her in flames, the privateer continued on her course, her track across the waters lighted up for leagues by the glare of the burning ship, which was driven rapidly along by the wind for a half an hour, when her towering and flaming masts tottered and fell and the ocean was left in midnight darkness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DOUBLE MEETING AND THE SWORD TRAGEDY.

Again is the privateer cruiser Hornet near the Cuban shores, but her commander has decided not to run close in. It is a quiet night, so he decides to take his cutter and rowing near the land go ashore and start upon his dangerous trip to join the Cuban army up in the mountains, for he will not listen to any one else taking this perilous journey.

"As soon as the cutter lands me, Edwardo, I will send it back; then you must make your best speed away from the coast."

On the sixth night from this, return and enter the cove near the cabin of Bonito, the fisherman, and I will be there to meet you with the escort that will accompany me from General Jordan's army, to conduct the recruits and their supplies into the interior," Mordaunt said to his lieutenant.

"Ah, Frank, I do wish you would let me go in your place on this perilous journey or at least share the danger with you."

"I thank you, Edwardo, but you will be in sufficient danger remaining at sea in the schooner, for the crew of that Spanish ship which we captured and burned and whom we landed at Porto Rico will soon report that we are on the coast, and you will have to keep a very bright lookout for Spanish vessels of war. So the danger, my dear Edwardo, is about equal, and though I could thoroughly trust Duke with the schooner, I think it is best you should also remain with her."

"As you wish it so I make no resistance, Frank. Here are the letters, and all things are now in readiness. I have had the oars muffled, as you directed, and will myself take charge of the boat that goes ashore."

In a short time the cutter was moving silently through the water, heading towards the point of rocks, for Mordaunt had decided to land near Buena Vista plantation that he might more easily find transportation to the Cuban army, as once before he had done.

Soon landing, Mordaunt bade adieu to the party in the boat and stood and watched its course on its way back to the cruiser until it was lost to sight in the darkness, then he carefully reconnoitered his position and ascended with great watchfulness to the summit of the hill.

After half an hour's walk he came into the road leading to Buena Vista and from which spot he could obtain an extensive view of the ocean.

Far out he could see the white sails of the Hornet, and noticing that she was standing away from the coast he felt relieved, for he knew that the cutter had safely returned, and that his schooner would soon be out of all danger from the Spanish steamers patrolling up and down the coasts in search of Cuban blockade runners.

"Good night, senor."

At the first sound of a voice Mordaunt's hand was upon his pistol, for he felt fully the great danger of his position and was prepared to sell his life dearly.

"It is as you say, senor, a good night," replied Mordaunt in perfect Spanish, for he had been addressed in that language, which he spoke perfectly.

"If I am not mistaken this is Captain Mordaunt."

"Ha! Major Aldano! I am glad and also sorry to meet you!" and without hesitation Mordaunt offered his hand, which the Spanish officer grasped in a most friendly manner.

"I am very sorry, Captain Mordaunt, that you have run this personal risk. I saw your vessel stand in and noticed the boat come ashore, but would not call out my men for I felt sure that you were not bound upon a warlike excursion or you would have come in full force, and therefore supposed that you or Lieutenant Valiente had been daring enough to

attempt to go to Buena Vista plantation."

"You are right, Major Aldano; but I beg pardon for calling you Major, and congratulate you upon your promotion. I should have said Colonel Aldano."

"Yes, I am going to Buena Vista, and I have heard of your many kindnesses there from Colonel Nunoz, who commanded the Cubans in the fight when last we met, the night of the landing of my expedition upon the coast."

"Yes, that was a dashing affair, and you whipped us fairly, I admit, although I will frankly say that we greatly outnumbered you. You and your men fought like demons. Colonel Nunoz I had met before; he was a gallant fellow. I infer that you have not heard of his sad fate?"

"No, my God! is he dead, too?"

"Yes, he was wounded in an engagement a short time since and was captured, and it pains me deeply to tell you that he was garroted. I tried hard to save him but could do nothing."

"General Jordan has revenged him, though, for he has made our officers suffer fearfully from retaliation, and sent word by flag of truce into our lines, a few days since, that he had not yet commenced avenging the death of Colonel Nunoz, but would make Spanish officers repent cruelly putting Nunoz to death."

"My God! how poor Cuba suffers! When will the United States and other nations of the earth come to our rescue and stop this horrible butchery in this beautiful island?" cried Mordaunt, with a pang of keenest sorrow at the sad news of his brave friend's death.

"I hope that it will, and soon, Captain Mordaunt; but I have still yet other sad news for you."

"Great heavens! has anything happened to Senorita Valiente, her mother, or Nita?" asked Mordaunt, excitedly.

"Nothing has harmed the ladies, Mordaunt, but they are not at Buena Vista, having been sent to Havana. I have my headquarters at their plantation, and am endeavoring to protect it all I can from the ravages which our soldiers seem to think it their duty to make upon Cuban property."

"Gone to Havana, Colonel? Why, may I ask?"

"Because the country was becoming very disturbed around here, but they were principally removed on account of the Captain General, who insisted that they should either leave the island or go into Havana. I urged their departure, Captain Mordaunt, because I believed it the best thing I could do, under existing circumstances, and I have made the plantation mansion my headquarters, as I said, to endeavor to protect all in my power the property of Senorita Valiente."

"Colonel Aldano, you have proved to be a faithful friend—"

An interruption came.

"Well, sir, I have reported to you as ordered!" said a newcomer. "My command is at the plantation, and hearing that you had walked down in this direction I followed, but must confess I am astonished to find Colonel Aldano a traitor to Spain."

"You lie, sir! You are a traitor to Cuba!" and with these words Frank Mordaunt sprang forward, with drawn sword, and stood face to face with his old enemy, Colonel Carlos Aguiar, who had silently approached and had overheard the words that had passed between the Spanish and Cuban officers.

Colonel Aldano was evidently very much annoyed and angry at the sly coming upon them of Colonel Aguiar, but he said quietly:

"Return to my quarters, sir, at once and await my coming."

With a light laugh Colonel Aguiar responded:

"This rebel here, this American commander of a Cuban piratical schooner, has given me the lie, sir, and I will punish him with death for the insult and bid Spain of one of her worst foes. That

done, I will return to my command and proclaim Colonel Aldano, the gallant cavalier and noble officer, a traitor to the Government whose commission he bears."

The tone of Agüia as he uttered these words was mocking and most insulting.

"Colonel Carlos Agüia, your courage is certainly improving, or you have forgotten a lesson I gave you some months ago for insolence," answered Colonel Aldano, sternly.

"Your time shall come, my noble Colonel, but now I must settle with this pirate, this conspirator Captain, who is leader of a branded brotherhood whom Spain will yet capture and hang like a cur that he is!"

"Now, sir, prepare to defend yourself!" and Carlos Agüia advanced upon Mordaunt with drawn sword.

"Captain Mordaunt, do you wish to meet this man?" asked the Spanish officer, turning to the commander of the privateer cruiser.

"I do, Colonel Aldano. We have, as he says, old scores to settle, so it might as well be done now," returned Mordaunt.

"Very well; I will see that justice is done," and, standing aside, Colonel Aldano motioned that the combat might commence.

With his sword presented, Mordaunt calmly awaited the attack of Agüia, who rapidly advanced, made a lunge at his antagonist, and the duel to the death began.

For a while Mordaunt acted wholly upon the defensive, not finding that Agüia was using his entire skill to slay him, and, remembering how worthless the man before him was, and his insult to Inez, and fearing if he spared his life he might in the future cause him much trouble, he had determined to kill him.

Having, during the time that these thoughts were passing through his mind allowed Agüia to drive him, greatly to Colonel Aldano's surprise, some paces backward, Mordaunt therefore nerved himself for the final encounter, and began pressing his adversary so closely that he soon gained ground, and in a few moments it was evident that Agüia was using all of his art at swordmanship to save his life.

But it was useless, for, after a few moments more of close contest, Mordaunt drove his sword through the heart of Agüia, who, uttering a loud shriek, fell dead upon the grass.

"He is no loss to his friends or his country, Captain Mordaunt," remarked Colonel Aldano as Frank coolly wiped his sword upon the grass of the blood stain upon it, and returned it to its scabbard.

"Yet, all the same, Colonel, I regret it was forced upon me to slay him."

"But this is no time for repining, Colonel Aldano," added Mordaunt; "I hope, sir, I am not to understand that I am your prisoner, for I cannot surrender to you."

"Neither do I wish you to do so, Captain Mordaunt. I will return to my quarters and report Agüia's death, stating that he was killed by you while attempting to capture you. You can make your escape, for you have certainly some way of leaving the island."

"I have come here to accomplish a certain errand, Colonel, and cannot return until I do so. Thanking you most sincerely for all you have done, I must now bid you good evening!"

"Be it so, if you know best; but, Mordaunt, I advise you to leave now while you can."

"No, sir; I must first attend to my duties," and shaking hands with the Spaniard, Mordaunt gave him the package of letters from the officers aboard the schooner, asking him to see that they were delivered after he had read them and found that they would do no harm.

Then the Cruiser Captain gave his

friend some messages for Inez, for Colonel Aldano told him he would soon go to Havana for a day or two.

The two officers then parted, and, turning into a by path, Mordaunt came upon a steed saddled and tied to a tree, and at a glance saw that it was Agüia's horse.

"Your master will never need you more, good horse, so I'll take you," he said, as he patted the neck of the handsome animal. At once he sprang into the saddle and dashed off down the road leading towards the camp of the Patriots.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TO THE COAST AND TO DESTRUCTION.

A full day and night passed before Mordaunt reached the camp of the Patriots, and a hard time of it he had before the welcome flag of the Cubans greeted his sight.

Tired and worn out by hard riding and hiding in the woods and hills from the Spaniards, without sleep and proper food, he was completely exhausted when he entered the lines and rode up to the headquarters of General Jordan.

That officer recognized him, and extended to him a warm welcome, while he ordered food for the exhausted man and horse.

Learning the particulars of his coming from Mordaunt, General Jordan at once promised him support, and sent for Colonel Ryan, his cavalry commander.

Upon the arrival of Colonel Ryan, General Jordan introduced him to Captain Mordaunt, and then said:

"Colonel, Captain Mordaunt here has brought in his vessel, now off the coast, thirty Cuban patriots and a large amount of ammunition, with arms of all kinds, and also stores and clothing for our poor ragged soldiers."

"He has ordered his vessel to be at a certain point upon the coast upon the fourth evening from this; so I wish you to take five hundred men to-morrow night and go with Captain Mordaunt to the place of landing, and bring back these men and things to camp."

"Take as many wagons and pack-mules as are necessary with you, and pick your men, for you may have to fight every step of the way there and back."

"All right, General Jordan. You may depend upon me, and I assure you no Spaniard will ever have a chance to boast that he captured anything from that supply train."

"Captain Mordaunt, I am most delighted to meet you. Your gallant deeds are well known in our camp, and I have been cursing our leaders—behind their backs—for not getting a fine steamer for you. With that you could make the Spanish cruisers hustle lively from around this island, I have no doubt."

Mordaunt thanked the brave Colonel for his praise and good wishes, and promised, if he ever was so fortunate as to command a steamer, he would certainly give a good account of himself.

Two nights after this conversation a regiment of cavalry and a train of wagons left the Patriot camp, and took up a line of march for the coast.

At its head rode the dashing commander, Colonel Ryan. The Cruiser Captain, Frank Mordaunt, was at his side, mounted on the fine black steed of Agüia, which had become rested after his long and hard ride, and was again in full mettle. The night was dark, but the way was well known to Mordaunt, and he guided the band on until daylight, when they halted in the woods at the road side for rest and refreshments.

Then the march was resumed, and towards nightfall a second halt was made, and after a two hours' rest the detachment once more was headed for the coast.

With the exception of occasional skirmishes with small squads of the Spaniards, no adventures occurred to interrupt the march, and towards daylight of

the second day of their journey they drew near the coast, and after stationing a strong guard, went into camp in a deep ravine about five miles distant from the hut of the fisherman Bonito.

During the day Mordaunt and Colonel Ryan felt great anxiety lest some accident might prevent the Hornet from coming in at night, as Eduardo had been ordered to do, and a short while after it grew dark they put the regiment on the march again, and rode for the coast.

The night was clear and starlight, and as the ocean broke on Mordaunt's view he uttered a fervent ejaculation of satisfaction as he descried in the offing the white sails of the privateer, and noticed that she was coming rapidly towards the harbor.

"We are all right now, Colonel. Leave the most of your men in line of battle here on the hill, and let the remainder accompany the wagons to the beach."

"It will not take more than three hours to get the things from the schooner and load the wagons; then you can at once start upon your return, and Heaven grant that you reach the camp in safety."

"Amen, Captain Mordaunt; and I shall breathe a prayer for your safety when you are once more upon the ocean surrounded by enemies always on the lookout for one they would be mighty glad to garrote."

Arriving upon the beach, Mordaunt was met by a boat from the schooner, and immediately the work of landing the arms began, and as fast as boats would bring them the men on shore would pack them in the wagons.

In less than three hours all was finished, and bidding adieu to the officers of the cruiser, Colonel Ryan and his command commenced their inland march, while Mordaunt and Eduardo went up to the cabin of Bonito to see him and to give in his charge some letters they wished delivered to a few of the planters in the neighborhood. The two friends were standing talking to the fisherman when they saw a flash illumine the darkness, and the report of a gun came to them.

"That is from the schooner! Quick! Duke sees danger, or he never would have fired that gun," and hastily bidding adieu to Bonito, the two officers ran at full speed towards the beach.

Arriving there, they found De Silver with the bow of the boat turned toward the schooner, the men at their oars, and all in readiness to dash off the minute their superior was on board.

"Quick, Captain! The Hornet is under full sail, and standing in toward us. Hark! There goes another gun! Duke must scent danger," cried De Silver.

The two officers sprang into the boat, and Mordaunt's quick command was uttered:

"Give way, men! And pull with a will!" which the sturdy seamen did, and in ten minutes' time the schooner was reached and the boat hoisted to the davits.

"What is it, Duke?" asked Mordaunt as he saw the men at quarters and the decks cleared for action.

"Look there, Captain!" and the Lieutenant pointed to the offing, and making toward the entrance to the cove were the lights of five vessels.

"By Heaven, we are trapped, sure enough! trapped, but not yet caught! Trim her well, Eduardo, and we'll try to run out, and Mordaunt closely scrutinized the vessels, which, under full steam, were then coming down upon him.

As the privateer was put away to try and clear the harbor, Mordaunt sprang upon the large gun aft, and in distinct and firm tones called out to his crew:

"Men, we are in a most dangerous position, with but one chance in our favor to ninety-nine against us, yet I am determined to attempt to run the gauntlet and reach the open sea."

"If we can do that we are safe; but if not, we have but one other course left, to fight to the bitter end, for there is no surrender aboard my vessel, and I swear to you, if you fail me, I will blow this ship and all in it into atoms!"

A long, loud yell of defiance, and three hearty cheers for the dauntless commander assured the cruiser's captain that his crew would stand by him through all, and with his face relieved of the desperate look which for a moment it had worn, he turned and in calm tones gave his orders.

The men stood at their guns, and the officers took their respective stands, in silence to await the opening fire, which they all knew must come soon.

"If we could turn that point, Edwardo, before they got a broadside into us, we could keep away down the coast in shallow water, and with this wind soon elude them. That must be our game to play. It is that or sink."

"Thank heaven, Ryan has gotten away safely!" Mordaunt added, fervently.

"Yes, for arms and supplies were sorely needed by the Patriots, returned Edwardo.

"Ed," and Frank's voice had lost its stern tone and was soft and gentle, "Ed, it is said that coming events cast their shadows before and I have an idea that all will not be well in this fight. I would not breathe to other than you what I now say; but, old fellow, if my lamp of life should be put out, and you are spared, tell Inez that I thought of her through all, and did all I could to serve Cuba."

"But," and his voice grew stern again, "if I do fall, it will be after Spain has had cause to regret this night's work, for many a man on those vessels will nevermore gladden his home with his presence."

Edwardo was pained deeply at his friend's words and manner, and was about to reply when the whole bay was lit up by the flashes of a dozen guns, and an iron hail storm came shrieking and howling toward the devoted schooner, which was struck in half a dozen places, and a few men fell to the deck torn and bleeding, dying.

"Fire!" and the ringing voice of the young commander gave the men courage as they returned the shots.

Then the combat became desperate, for three gunboats and two sloops of war came on toward the Hornet, pouring in their fire as they came, and the little vessel answered defiance from her three rifled guns, while the cheers of her crew could be distinctly heard on land, and by those on the decks of the enemies.

The unequal combat began to tell upon the privateer for, with many of her men cut down, one of her guns dismounted, and her decks strewn with the dead and dying, the Cuban cruiser was in a fearful condition to maintain the struggle against her powerful adversaries.

"Load the forward gun with grape and the stern gun with shell," called out Mordaunt, who stood with folded arms gazing upon the ruin and carnage around him.

"De Silver, go forward and take command of that gun. Duke has just fallen."

"Rudolph, where is Edwardo?" but as the Captain spoke, and as Rudolph was about to reply, a shell struck the Cuban and hurled him over the side of the vessel.

"This is fearful. All of my officers but two gone! Stand to your guns, men, and fight it out," continued Mordaunt, calling out the last sentence to his crew.

"Captain Mordaunt," and turning he saw Juan, the faithful servant of Senora Valiente.

"What is it Juan? How did you get here?"

"Bonito and myself came alongside in a boat. Marse Edwardo is wounded badly and we put him in the boat and want you to come, too."

"No, good Juan; I must stay by my ship. Leave at once, and take good care of Edwardo. Make Bueno go with you."

"There lies poor Bueno, dead, Captain!" and the negro pointed to where the faithful servant of Frank lay, the deck red with his blood.

"My God, this is horrible! Steady, men; steady! Aim well; there is no hurry!" and the voice was ringing. No tremor of fear was in it as the young commander called out to the crew around the forward gun, for that one alone now was left to the privateer.

"Here, Harry March, where are you?" cried Mordaunt.

"Here I am, sir!" and the young cabin boy ran up to his Captain, his face pale as death.

"Get into the boat alongside and go ashore. This is no place for you!"

"Never, Captain Mordaunt! My place is by your side, in death as in life!" and the boy laid his head upon his Captain's shoulder.

One long glance into that upturned face, and in a voice for the first time tremulous, Mordaunt said:

"May Hill! My God, why did you follow my fortunes?"

"Because I love you, Frank!"

"Hush! This will never do! Here, Juan, you and Bonito take this youth with you in the boat."

"No, Frank; I will not leave you; I will die with you!" cried May Hill as she threw herself into Mordaunt's arms.

"May, you must go!" and by force the girl's arms were released.

"Here, Juan, take her with you. It is a woman, not a boy. Take her with you!" and the stern mouth relaxed as it pressed the white lips of May as Juan took her up in his arms, for she had fainted from her exhaustion and excitement.

"Now be off, Juan!" The negro sprang into his boat, Bonito shoved off from the fated schooner, with a "God have mercy on you, Captain Mordaunt!" and, laying to their oars, the fishermen pulled in toward a part of the coast out of range of the firing, with Edwardo unconscious and wounded in the bottom of the boat, and May, also insensible, lying in the stern.

"We have nothing to do more but die, De Silver!" said Captain Mordaunt as his midshipmate came aft and reported that his last gun was dismantled, and only half a dozen men were left.

The Spanish vessels were now in close range, and still continued to pour upon the fated schooner a most terrific fire; and, seeing that all hope was gone, Mordaunt said:

"De Silver, take the men in one of the boats and go ashore. There is a chance of escape there."

"And you, Captain Mordaunt?" queried the faithful officer. After an instant's hesitation, Frank answered:

"I will accompany you. The Surgeon was wounded early in the action; I will bring him from the cabin."

"Man the boat there, men," and the men, but seven all told, sprang to obey the order.

The boat was lowered into the water, and, coming upon deck, Mordaunt said:

"He is dead, also, poor fellow. I have set the schooner on fire, De Silver. The Spaniards shall never have her. Shove off!" And springing into the boat, Mordaunt took the tiller, the men gave way, and pulled rapidly from the vessel that for so long had been their home.

"Her colors still fly, De Silver; they were never lowered!" and a proud look came into the cruiser Captain's face.

Seeing that the schooner was on fire, and that her decks were deserted, the Spaniards ceased their firing, and gazed upon the still unsundered little craft which the flames were rapidly consuming, and fearing the blowing up of her magazine, they steamed off to a safe distance with a feeling of bitter disappointment that they had not captured the noted privateer with her wonderful commander.

Rapidly burned the Hornet, and in a

few moments after Mordaunt had left her deck, earth, sea, and sky were lit up, and, with a mighty explosion that caused the waves to tremble and the land to seem shaken as by an earthquake, and was heard far away in the Patriot camp in the mountains, the beautiful privateer schooner was blown into ten thousand fragments, and found a grave beneath the sea.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN HARD LUCK AND THE FRIEND IN NEED.

After rowing down the coast of the little cove for some time Mordaunt saw ahead of him a boat, which he soon discovered was the one that Bonito had come out to the schooner in.

Calling to him in a low tone, Bonito stopped rowing, and when the cutter came near, Mordaunt spoke:

"Bonito, there are eight of us here, with the two you have; these are all that are left of my crew. I intended to land and endeavor to overtake Colonel Ryan and his party, so I wish you to take these men and hide them in some cavern on the coast until you can run out with them in your little schooner and aid them to leave the island."

"Yes, sir; but you had best go with us. It's a great risk going inland now. I can hide you all, so that the Spaniards will never find you, and the old woman will feed you well."

"Thank you, Bonito, but I must go and report to Jordan. Is Edwardo still unconscious?"

"Yes, sir; I think his leg is broken by a shot, but neither he nor the girl have come to since we left the schooner."

"Well, I will land on the point of land ahead, but you continue on to the cavern."

"I will let you hear from me in a few days, De Silver, and in the mean time keep the men close! When you leave the island, let May remain with Bonito's wife. I will see that she is cared for."

"Keep up good hearts, boys, and we'll soon be afloat again!"

The boat touched the rocks; Mordaunt sprang ashore, and, raising his cap, turned and walked away, while the boats pulled off down the coast and landed about two miles distant, where a range of hills jutted out into the ocean.

Mordaunt entered a small clump of woods, and began to look around him for a path which he knew would lead him to the plantation of Senor Rudolph. There he hoped to procure a horse, which would enable him to overtake the command of Colonel Ryan, that now had had some hours' start on the inland march.

After an hour's walk, Frank came in sight of the house, and stopped to reconnoitre. Lights were visible in the windows, but he feared that some of the servants might see him and give information to the Spanish troops, were there any near, as he naturally presumed they would be.

He knew that most of the servants could be trusted, but he did not wish to run any risk of being seen by any of them.

For a long time he stood there in deep thought. His heart was sorrow-heavy, as he remembered the sad fate that had befallen his noble companions, and that his vessel was lost.

Bitterly did he mourn his loss and Cuba's loss, and earnestly did he vow vengeance if he ever trod the deck of another vessel.

At last, seeing that all was quiet around the house, he approached with exceeding caution, and looked in at one of the windows.

There sat Senor Rudolph and two of his children, and as Frank caught sight of the sad face of the old man, his heart sickened at thought of the renewed pain he must inflict in taking him news of the death of his son.

A gentle tap on the window caused the old man and children to start, and as

Senor Rudolph rose to his feet, Mordaunt slightly raised the sash and called him by name.

"Who is there?" asked the old man.

"It is I, Frank Mordaunt, Senor."

"Heaven be praised!" and with a few steps the old man reached the window and threw it up, while Mordaunt bounded lightly into the room, and, turning, lowered the sash and drew down the shade.

"Now, what is it, Mordaunt? Why are you here? What has happened? You have had a fearful engagement, for we have heard the guns."

"Yes, Senor, and I have brought you fearful news. Nearly all my crew—all but seven of them—are gone!"

"My boy, my boy! Quick! tell me! Is he dead, Mordaunt?" cried the poor old man, as he extended both hands toward Frank.

"He died at his post, nobly, and his life has gone for the cause of Cuba he loved so well." The Cruiser Captain solemnly imparted the story.

"My boy dead?—my noble boy! His mother slain, and now he has gone," and Senor Rudolph bowed his gray head in sorrow and wept aloud, while the two children, little girls of ten and twelve years of age, came and put their arms around their father's neck and also sobbed piteously, for their brother had idolized them, and they had loved him dearly.

Mordaunt stood and gazed upon the sad scene for some moments, and then said:

"Senor Rudolph, I regret beyond words to express that I have brought you such news, but it is, alas, too true. But I dare not tarry here. As quickly as possible I must make my way to Jordan's camp. Will you furnish me with a horse?"

"Indeed I will, but it is madness for you to attempt that ride now, as the whole coast is in alarm, and the Spanish troops patrol all the roads. So, Captain, stay here with me for the present. I can conceal you, and—"

"No, Senor, I must leave to-night," the cruiser Captain interrupted. "I must see—"

"No, sir; you are my prisoner!"

The door swung wide, and an officer in Spanish uniform entered the room, followed by a dozen or more soldiers.

Mordaunt glanced up, drew his revolver, but seeing that a shot from him would bring a volley that would kill the senor and the children near him, and knowing that though he were to kill one or more of his enemies in the end he would be taken, he returned his pistol, and said coolly:

"I submit, senor."

"It is well for you, sir, for I don't wish to slay you. Please give me your arms, and I will take you to the commanding officer's."

Mordaunt yielded up his sword and pistols, and stepping forward said:

"I am ready, sir."

He was then led from the house, and giving him a horse to ride, the party mounted and rode away from the spot, taking the highway which led toward the nearest camp of the Spaniards in that vicinity.

Mordaunt was carried by his captor directly toward Buena Vista, and as the sun rose above the tree tops he dismounted at the door of the house where in he had passed the happiest days of his life, and with the remembrance of Inez, a feeling that almost overpowered him affected him.

He was ushered into the library by the officer who had taken him, with the remark:

"I have brought you a prisoner, Colonel."

Seated at a table, writing, Mordaunt saw an officer in undress uniform, and as he raised his eyes at the Lieutenant's remark he displayed the handsome face of Colonel Aldano.

"My God, Mordaunt! At last you have been taken! How I feel for you!" and Colonel Aldano grasped the privateersman by the hand.

"Yes, Colonel, I am caught at last," said Frank, while he took a seat that the Spanish officer placed for him.

"Leave the prisoner with me, Lieutenant," and Colonel Aldano motioned to the officer to retire.

When the two men were alone together Aldano said:

"The Blessed Virgin knows I feel for you, Mordaunt. I witnessed the whole engagement, and how bravely you fought for your vessel, and I really believed that you had escaped, for with my glasses I saw a boat leave the schooner, and thought I recognized you in it."

"Yes, I left the schooner, after setting her on fire, and landed, in hopes of reaching Jordan's camp, for I believed I could overtake Ryan."

"You might have done so had you been mounted. Ryan whipped me back shortly after he left the coast, and, getting orders to send half of my men to another point on the coast, I withdrew from the pursuit, for I knew I could accomplish nothing with the one squadron I had left. But where is the rest of your party?"

"They are hidden away, Senor; but now, Colonel Aldano, I wish to trust to your honor. I will realize the fate that awaits me, and I will meet it like a man, but there is one person of whom I would speak, and I trust her to your honor," and then Mordaunt went on to tell Colonel Aldano of May Hill, and gave him her history from his first meeting her up to that moment. In concluding he said:

"Now, Senor Aldano, I will tell you where you can go and find the girl, and I beg that you will have her carried to Senora Valiente, in Havana, and ask her to see that Miss Hill returns to her parents upon their island home on Casco Bay."

"I promise you this faithfully, Mordaunt; and more, too. I have a surgeon here, my cousin, whom I can trust. He shall accompany me to the cavern and care for Edwardo and the men's wounds, and also see if he can aid the young girls. Give me your word of honor that you will not attempt to escape, and I will allow you to remain free, here, in my quarters, while I at once send for my surgeon and go with him to the cavern."

"They will be safe there, I think, and can escape from the island as soon as Edwardo is able to go. The lady I will bring back with me, or in some way arrange about her."

"I give you my parole, willingly," answered Mordaunt.

Colonel Aldano then called a servant and bade him show Captain Mordaunt to a room and ordered him to get some refreshments for him.

Thanking the Colonel, Mordaunt followed the servant from the room, while the Spanish officer summoned his surgeon, who, as he had said, was a cousin of his, and upon his entering the room, told him to get his case of surgical instruments and bandages, and to accompany him.

The surgeon was soon in readiness, and mounting their horses the two left the plantation of Buena Vista and took the road leading toward Bonito's cabin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

After leaving Mordaunt on the rocks the two boats, under the guidance of Bonito, pulled down the rock-bound coast for some two miles, and then the party landed.

"Let us remove the Lieutenant and the girl to the shore, and then we must sink the schooner's boats," said Bonito; and, carefully lifting Edwardo and May from the boat, they were placed upon the shore. The cutter was shoved out some distance from the beach, loaded with stones and sunk.

"So far, good! Now, Juan, you stay here by my boat and watch the girl, while I take the party up to the cavern. Take the oars, men, and make a litter for poor Lieutenant Valiente."

The old fisherman's orders were hastily obeyed, and the party started up the hill.

Coming to a place where a few stunted bushes grew upon the face of the rocks, Bonito pushed them aside, and disclosed an opening. This he entered and bade the men to follow. Once inside, the darkness shadowed them; but Bonito soon produced a light, which evidently he kept there for an emergency.

"You see, I have got this place all prepared for the old woman and myself, should the Spaniards get after us. I have got provisions here, all we will need, and once a day I will bring you things from the cabin. Now keep the bushes undisturbed before the mouth of the cave and all will be well."

"As soon as I can take the girl up to the cabin to leave her with the old woman I will see what can be done for the poor Lieutenant, for he seems in a bad way."

So saying, brave and kind old Bonito left the cavern, and returning to the beach he and Juan again placed May in his own boat, and taking the oars rowed over to a promontory upon which his cabin was built.

Arriving in front of the little white hut, which had three rooms and was surrounded by a garden of half an acre, Bonito took the still unconscious girl up in his arms, and, accompanied by Juan, entered the house.

"Here, mother; I've brought you a guest. She is a girl in man's clothes. You are to care for her as if she were your own flesh and blood. Give her some of our poor Juanita's clothing and put her to bed at once. I brought her from the schooner, which is now in the bottom of the sea, as you must have seen."

"The girl seems to be in a dead swoon, for she has not spoken since I took her from Captain Mordaunt's care, off the vessel."

Thus talking, the old fisherman was stirring around the room to get things ready for May, while his wife was making her comfortable by putting her in bed. Then restoratives were given her, and after a full half hour of anxious waiting, the good couple were rejoiced to have their patient open her beautiful eyes.

"Where am I?" she at once asked, staring around.

"With friends, my dear child."

"Tell me, oh tell me, is he dead?" and the young girl half sprung from the bed as the remembrance of the schooner and Mordaunt's peril came suddenly to her mind.

"No, lady; he is safe on shore," answered Bonito.

"Then why does he not come to me?"

"He has gone to see General Jordan, lady, but promised to come back soon."

"Thank heaven, he is safe! He was not wounded then?"

"No; he escaped unhurt, though nearly all his crew fell around him, and the schooner was burnt up."

"Poor Frank!" and from under the closed lids the teardrops would steal.

As Bonito and his wife gazed upon the lovely American, they deeply pitied her distress, and determined to do all in their power for her.

Years before a daughter had brightened their humble cabin, but a little mound on the hillside marked her resting place, for in her opening womanhood she had been called from them, and their hearthstone had been left desolate—desolate indeed.

The sun had risen brightly after the sad scene of the night, and here and there along the beach were fragments of the privateer cruiser, while the charred and mutilated bodies of her crew came in with the heavy shore tide.

The two, having seen May pass into a sweet sleep, proceeded to the beach to

see if they could discover the bodies of those they knew among the crew, and were returning unsuccessful when they saw two horsemen riding toward them.

"Good morning, Bonito! A sad scene, this!" said Colonel Aldano, for he was one of the horsemen.

"Yes, Colonel, it is sad, indeed. Did the Spanish vessel suffer much last night?" asked the fisherman, who was anxious to learn if the Spaniards had not been punished severely in their combat with the gallant Cuban cruiser.

"A messenger just now came from the fleet. The vessels all admitted a very severe loss; but, Bonito, I wish to have a few words with you in private," and stepping aside together, Colonel Aldano told the fisherman of Captain Mordaunt's capture and of his knowledge of the escape of De Silva and his party.

"I know you have been to us all, Colonel, a good and honorable friend, and so I think it is fortunate you are here. Now, something ought to be done for Senor Edwardo, and if you and your cousin, the surgeon, go up to the tavern with me I will think the Blessed Virgin has sent you. I know if Captain Mordaunt sends you it is all right, even if you are a Spanish commander."

"The girl is there in my cabin, and you can see her if you would like to."

"Yes, Bonito, I wish particularly to see her," and leading the way the fisherman went toward his cabin.

Entering his cabin Bonito went to May Hill, and, arousing her from her slumber, told her that a Spanish officer desired to see her, and also informed her of the very many kindnesses Colonel Aldano had shown to Mordaunt's friends and to the patriots.

At the mention of the name, May remembered all that Mordaunt had told her of this Spanish friend, so she consented at once to see him, and hastily resuming her neat sailor boy's attire, she asked Bonito to bring him into the room.

Though very pale, and with a look of pain upon her face, May looked most beautiful, for her cap had been thrown aside and her hair fell in waves around her head.

As Colonel Aldano entered the door he looked in wonder at the fair creature before him, and bowing, he said:

"Pardon my intrusion, Miss Hill, but I come to you with a message from Captain Mordaunt."

"From Senor Mordaunt? Oh, what of him, sir? Tell me, is he safe?"

"He is a prisoner, Senorita, but I have left him on parole at my quarters."

"A prisoner? Frank Mordaunt a prisoner? Why, to be a prisoner to Spain is to be condemned to death!" and the sad eyes filled with tears.

"Too true; but something may be done for Captain Mordaunt," and Colonel Aldano went on to tell May the particulars of Mordaunt's capture.

The interview lasted fully an hour, and the young girl's face wore a more hopeful look as Colonel Aldano left.

It was arranged that May should remain at the house of the fisherman, and for fear of straggling bands of Spaniards coming there, that she should change her sailor's costume for the clothes of Bonito's daughter.

"Now, Bonita, I will get you and Juan to go on to the camp with us," said Colonel Aldano, and the four men started up the hill toward the cavern, where the remnants of the crew of the privateer were concealed.

Arriving there, De Silva and his men were very much astonished to see Bonito enter with two Spanish officers, and, supposing that they were betrayed, they threw themselves upon the defensive, but a few words from Colonel Aldano placed matters right, and having the little cot upon which Edwardo was lying brought forward, the surgeon at once commenced to examine his hurts.

There was one slight wound on the head, and this was soon dressed; and one upon the arm was also cared for by the skilled surgeon.

After a close examination for some time, the surgeon turned to his cousin and said:

"Guion, this arm must come off; there is no help for it!"

A moan of pity was heard from the group of seamen, while De Silva stepped forward and spoke:

"Permit me to aid you, sir. I know some little about surgery. I have all along feared that our poor Lieutenant would have to lose his arm."

"Thank God, it is no worse!" reverently said Colonel Aldano.

Thus it was decided.

Edwardo's arm was amputated above the elbow, and having returned to consciousness, he was made comfortable. The Spanish officers then departed; the surgeon promising to return each night or day and care for his patient.

The officers, on their return, passing near the fisherman's cabin, Colonel Aldano determined to stop and tell May of her wounded friend.

If handsome in her sailor boy's suit, May looked far more charming in her neat calico dress, which she had donned upon Colonel Aldano's return. It fitted her lithe figure well, and the officer felt the power of her wonderful beauty as he gazed upon her. He informed her of his visit to the cavern and of the amputation of Edwardo's arm, but said, encouragingly, that all were doing well.

Two weeks he thought would elapse before they could leave their retreat. In that time he hoped the Lieutenant would be able to stand the voyage over to the United States coast.

The surgeon was then called in and left some medicine with the girl, advising her to take it for her own good; and mounting their horses, the two rode back to Buena Vista.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONDEMNED.

Upon his return to Buena Vista, Colonel Aldano went to Mordaunt's room and told him all he had done, and then he continued:

"Before leaving, Captain Mordaunt, I made, as in duty bound, a report to the commanding officer of your capture, and stated that I would hold you as a prisoner until your trial, which will take place in a few days."

"You are a brave man, Senor Mordaunt; but, as you must be aware, you stand no earthly chance of pardon. Let me tell you, however, that the senorita is enlisted in your behalf, and will leave nothing undone to aid in your escape. It is possible, but not probable, that success may attend her efforts. I will place no obstacle in her way, but must do my duty, and keep you closely confined and guarded."

While Colonel Aldano was speaking not a muscle of Mordaunt's face changed; no look of fear crossed it when he was told there was no hope of pardon for him, and no light of hope gladdened his eyes when he heard there was a possibility of escape.

He sat perfectly unmoved through all; then, rising, he extended his hand to the Colonel, and said:

"You have been a true friend, Colonel Aldano; if I am doomed to die, I will face it as I have faced death many times; if I can escape without compromising you, I certainly shall avail myself of the possibility."

"Mordaunt, I have decided to send for your friends—the senorita, her mother, and Senorita Nita."

"Thank you, Colonel. I did hope to spare them the pain, but I think it best they should come and say farewell to me, for it will at once end their hopes of my escape; but if I do get free, it will be so much the better."

"I will write to them. You please do the same."

Frank wrote as follows:

"Buena Vista.

"My Dear Senora:—

"I write you, as you perceive, from

your old home, where I am now the prisoner of Colonel Aldano.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the capture of myself and crew, and to relieve your mind regarding your son, I will say that he was wounded, and was carried from the schooner in the boat, by Bonito.

"He is now concealed at the cavern, and is doing as well as could be expected.

"Excepting De Silva and myself, there are, besides Edwardo, none of my officers living, and only a very few of my men.

"I am to be tried, and, need I say, condemned, for you well know what Spanish justice is, for the trial will be a mockery.

"Colonel Aldano is willing that you should pass through his lines, and come to Buena Vista to see me, so if you will come, you will cheer the last hours of a man who is standing upon the brink of the grave.

"Of course I feel that you will bring Inez and Nita with you, and with the hope of seeing you soon, believe me,

"Devotedly yours,

"FRANK MORDAUNT."

Colonel Aldano's letter read:

"Buena Vista Plantation.

"Esteemed Senora:—

"I enclose a letter from Captain Mordaunt, and urge my wishes with his that you will visit him here while he is a prisoner in my hands.

"I hold out no hope of pardon to him, but will do all I honorably can, and hope for the best.

"Your rooms shall be ready to receive you, and upon Saturday evening at 9 o'clock I will meet you at our lines, and escort you to your home.

"Hoping you will come, with Senorita Nita and your daughter, and add a drop of joy to a cup full of misery in poor Mordaunt's life, I remain,

"With respect,

"GUION ALDANO,

"Colonel, etc."

To picture the pain that pierced the breasts of Senora Valiente and the two young girls when these letters were received, is impossible. They had learned of the loss of the schooner, with all on board, and it was reported that her reckless commander had blown her up with the living and the dead, rather than surrender her into Spanish hands.

Now a joy that Mordaunt and Edwardo yet lived filled their hearts, and though one lay grievously wounded, and the other was under sentence of death, they hoped for the best, and set out upon their journey to Buena Vista.

Senora Valiente had made her arrangements to leave Cuba and go to the United States, and she had, through her banker, bought a small house in the outskirts of New Orleans. They were all prepared to start, when the sad news regarding the loss of the privateer cruiser reached them.

Before the ladies reached him, Mordaunt's trial came on, and, as if mocking a tribunal of justice, a few giddy-headed officers composed the court-martial.

Mordaunt, pale, but calm, faced his accusers, and his handsome face and quiet bearing won him the admiration of his enemies.

The trial was brief, and the sentence of the court-martial was:

"Death for piracy against the flag of Spain."

No face in the room showed less emotion than did the prisoner's, and as the sentence was read, a smile which no one present could comprehend, trembled for an instant upon his lips.

"In consideration of the requests of Colonel Aldano," continued the judge, after passing the sentence, "as well as of Captain Marquis of the sloop-of-war *Minta*, and of a few others of the Spanish navy and army, the prisoner will not die by the garrote, but will be shot by a

platoon of marines, upon the seventh day from this, at sunrise."

Mordaunt bowed low to the judge, and said, in an unmoved voice:

"I thank the court for this favor, and particularly do I thank Colonel Aldano and the other officers for their kindness in the request that I be shot to death."

"I am an American, but seeing Cuba has brought this upon me, I do not regret dying for the land of my adoption, and hope that my death in this manner will prove to the nations of the world, and particularly to my own native country the barbarity of the war now waged by Spain against this poor struggling island and cause them to stretch forth a helping hand to a brave, but down-trodden people."

Turning to his guards, Mordaunt motioned that he was ready, and returned to Buena Vista, a condemned man, one who had but a short term longer to live.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SAD PARTING.

Upon entering his room at Buena Vista, after returning from the trial which had resulted in his condemnation, Mordaunt was surprised and delighted to find Senora Valiente, Inez and Nita there.

They had arrived during the trial, and Colonel Aldano had had them sent to Frank's room, to await his coming.

For a few moments after his greeting was over, not a word was spoken, and the sobs of Inez and Nita were painful to listen to.

At length Mordaunt said:

"Inez, dear, do not take so much to heart this blow. Remember, I will only suffer the fate that hundreds of others have suffered before me."

"Oh! Frank, dear, dear Frank! I cannot give you up," sobbed the girl, held fast in his enclasping arms.

"It is inevitable, Inez. I am condemned to death, and I shall meet the ordeal bravely. Through the kindness of Colonel Aldano and a few other officers, I will be shot instead of being garroted. This is a great favor, for I feared the latter."

"Frank, my brother, is there no hope for you?" asked Nita, raising her tearful face to the man who had indeed been a brother to her.

"None that I can see, Nita. And now let me have a talk with you all."

"You remember I was attacked in the cove, and was trying to run the schooner out when she was crippled. Seeing that I could not escape, I determined to fight to the bitter end."

"All of my officers fell around me except De Silver, and as I called Edwardo, for I did not see him fall, a man touched me on the arm. He and Bonito had seen how the fight must end, and had come out in their little boat, and in the fearful storm of shot and shell, determined to aid us."

"Already they had placed Edwardo in their boat, and I then made them take a person whom, up to that time, I believed to be a cabin boy. With these the boat shoved off, and finding that my last gun was dismantled, and only De Silver and seven men remained, I set the Hornet on fire, and ordering the crew into the cutter, escaped with them to the shore."

"Edwardo and the remainder of the party were taken by Bonito and Juan to the cavern in the rocks, while I went up to the Rudolph plantation, and there I was taken prisoner."

"You have heard me speak of May Hill, surely—the young girl who nursed me through my illness when I was wrecked upon her father's island, in Casco Bay, Maine. Well; this brave girl urged me to let her accompany me upon the schooner, and as I, of course, refused, she dressed up as a sailor, and hid herself until after we sailed, and neither Edwardo nor myself recognized in the bright, handsome cabin boy, the girl May Hill."

"My first discovery of her sex was when I ordered her into Bonito's boat, in the midst of the battle, and she refused to go, and fell fainting on the deck. Bonito then took her up in his arms, bore her to the boat, and finally took her to his home, where his wife has done all she could to make her comfortable. Doctor Aldano, the cousin of the Colonel and surgeon of his regiment, went with Colonel Aldano to see her, and says she is now fully restored to health, and will be able to leave soon."

"So now I have this favor to ask: That you will allow her to go with you to the United States, and see that she starts for her home upon the coast of Maine, for she is a brave, pure woman, and her parents must be fearfully anxious about her."

"Regarding Edwardo, I am sorry to say that he has lost an arm—his left arm, which was taken off by Surgeon Aldano!"

"My God!" came from the mother's lips.

"Now he will no longer be fitted for service, and you must keep him with you, so it is not without compensation to him and to you that he has met with this loss."

"In a few days I must die. I do not wish any of you on the island then, so please return to Havana, and sail for New Orleans by the first steamer. Colonel Aldano will get you passes through the lines."

"Edwardo is doing very well, but as he is supposed to be dead by his enemies, he must be kept quiet and concealed until he is able to get away; then he will go in Bonito's boat, with De Silver and his crew."

"I have thus told you everything, for I wished you to know perfectly how matters were, and though I long so much to have you near me, and it is most painful to give you up, I think it is best that you should go, and go as soon as you can, for staying here now will but prolong the misery of all concerned."

As the grand, stern man ceased speaking, he turned towards the window and hid his face from those who, through tearful eyes, were watching him.

"Let me send for Colonel Aldano, and ask his advice," and calling from the window to an orderly, Mordaunt bade him ask the Colonel to come up to his room.

In a short while the Colonel entered, and the matter was discussed, and he urgently requested the ladies to at once leave for the United States, for he argued with Mordaunt, that their stay there would only make it worse for all. He also stated that he would at once drive down and see May Hill; but he knew of no excuse he could give for her coming up to Buena Vista, and so thought she had best remain for the present, as it might excite suspicion and cause a search to be made along the coast.

Though the gallant Colonel did not say so, he had another reason for not wishing May to immediately depart, for he had become intensely interested in the lovely girl, and was determined to do all he could to win her affections, after the sad blow of Mordaunt's death had been partially healed by time.

He therefore promised Mordaunt that he would himself see that she went safely home to her parents, and as it was agreed that the ladies should now take their departure, the Colonel said:

"Senora Valiente, I will now see that your carriage is ready, and will have a guard to accompany you, and give you passes that will save you trouble."

"From New Orleans send me your address, and allow me to aid you here in any way in my power."

"If there is anything in Buena Vista you wish to carry with you, take it, and I will be responsible to my Government for it. I hold out to you no hope of a pardon for our poor friend here, but will

do all in my power to urge it, and aid him."

"Now, I will bid you good-bye."

Each of the ladies then shook hands with Aldano, and thanked him warmly for his many kindnesses to them.

The prisoner was then left alone with those he loved, and from whom he must so now part.

"Oh! Frank, with you gone from me, how can I live, how can I wish to live?"

"Inez, you will sorrow deeply for me, I know, but remember I died for your Cuba; and soon in my own native land you will find a pleasant home, and Edwardo will be with you, and he and Nita will be happy in each other's love."

"Frank, you will kill me to talk of my happiness while you look down into your open grave," almost shrieked poor Nita.

"Oh! Nita, you must not let my death cloud your young life. Mourn for me all of you, and think of me often, but let not my unhappy end embitter your lives, and take away the sunshine from them."

"Colonel Aldano has promised me, Senora, that my remains shall be cared for and buried in the Buena Vista plantation cemetery."

"Yes, my son, you shall indeed find a resting place in our own graveyard, and if I ever return to this, my home, when war has left our land, you shall be remembered as one of my own children," and Senora Valiente was overcome with deep feeling, for she dearly loved Frank, and feared that his death might seriously affect Inez, whose very soul seemed centred in him.

"Now I must bid you farewell, for I feel my strength leaving me, and I must remain firm!" and the quivering lip showed that his mighty effort of self-control was almost breaking the brave heart of the condemned man.

But, reader, why dwell upon this agonizing scene, and deepen wounds that have yet to heal, for in that quiet home in the sunny south, where now dwell those who loved him, the memory of Frank Mordaunt remains fresh and green, and many summer's suns shall shine, and winter's snows shall come and go ere the privateer Captain shall be forgotten by those who so loved him that they would gladly have died for him, if by such sacrifice he could have lived.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DOOMED, AND ALL IS OVER!

"Frank!"

Captain Mordaunt started from his reverie and glanced around toward the door. He had been gazing out upon the beautiful moonlight, and communing with his own sad thoughts, for on the morrow he was doomed to die.

A week had passed since his bitter parting with Inez, her mother and Nita, and he was thinking of them, by that time in their new home, in his own sunny land, which he was never again to see. Thus, in a sad waking dream of by-gone happy days, that would come no more, the hours were gliding by, the hour of his death drawing near.

"Frank!"

Again his name was called, and with an effort he threw off his apathy and asked:

"Who calls me?"

"I, Frank, May Hill!" and with a bound the girl was by his side, her face buried on his shoulder, while great sobs shook her slight frame.

"What! May—you?"

"Do not say I should not have come. I know you have said good-bye to all—to her whose kiss upon your lips you wish to remain there until they are cold in death."

"I will not kiss you, Frank; but, oh! do let me remain with you—until—until, the fatal hour is over!" the poor girl begged piteously.

"May, I feared to have you come to say good-bye, so I wrote you that note to-day. I have but a few short hours to live, and though I would be glad to have you near me, I must be alone, for I need

to collect my senses that I may remain firm upon the morrow. Your suffering unmans me."

"I will not weep, Frank; I will keep quiet, and only beg to stay by you," and she clung close to Mordaunt, and begged not to be put away.

How pale and cold that stern face looked in the moonlight, as it gazed down upon the sobbing girl; but the lips tightly pressed kept back the moan of anguish that racked his frame.

For some moments no word was spoken; then the door gently opened, and Colonel Aldano entered.

"Forgive me, Mordaunt, if I disobeyed your request. I could not resist the earnest entreaties of Miss Hill.

"Up to this moment, my friend, I have hoped for your life from two sources—one by a pardon, the other by an escape.

"The pardon is refused, decidedly, and my plan for your escape is foiled by those who were to manage it having been ordered at once to Havana with the commanding general.

"Thus, my poor friend, all hope has failed," and tears came into the generous Spaniard's eyes, as he held forth his hand to the doomed man.

"I thank you, Senor Aldano, for all you have done. So let it be; I will die on the morrow. I have felt no hope, so am not cast down by disappointment.

"Now, I must ask you to take May back to the cabin of Bonito, and, Colonel Aldano, look upon her and take care of her as you would your own sister, for she is worthy of all respect, all love.

"Now, May, good-bye! Oh, she has fainted! Better so! Take her, Colonel, and now good-night!" and, while Colonel Aldano lifted May in his arms, and bore her away, Mordaunt walked across the room, and throwing himself in a chair, again looked out upon the moonlight, and wandered in thought to the bitter struggle that would come to him ere another sun had set.

The morning dawned in cloudless splendor, and the merry songs of birds greeted the rising sun as if in mockery of the sad scene soon to be enacted within a lonely vale near Buena Vista.

Mordaunt had not retired during the night, and as daylight came creeping into his window he arose from his chair, and attiring himself in his usual uniform, placed his cap upon his head and commenced pacing the floor while waiting for the coming of the guard that should escort him to the place of execution.

A tap upon the door, and to his call, "Come in," the door was opened and Colonel Aldano entered, followed by an officer dressed in full uniform.

"Mordaunt, I have not to give the order of your execution, for the Captain here has taken my place."

"I am glad of it, sincerely glad of it, Colonel, for I do not wish to leave this world by the command of a friend.

"Where is May?"

"She is in the carriage at the door; she would insist upon going to—to—see you—to see the execution."

"I am sorry for it; now I am ready, Captain," and the three left the room.

Entering a carriage with the officer who attended him from the room, and two others, Mordaunt was driven through the lovely grounds of Buena Vista, and his eyes looked wistfully on either side as the vehicle passed scenes familiar to him, and where he and Inez had often wandered together in the joyous days that were now gone forever.

Arriving at a small plat of ground, Mordaunt saw a large number of troops drawn up in their lines, with the further side open toward the woods.

Declining the aid of his companion, he alighted from the carriage and glanced around upon the scene.

Near him were drawn up a file of men who were to be his executioners, and as he passed them by, to take his designated stand, he politely raised his cap to them, and they all returned the salute.

He took the position assigned him, refused to have his hands bound, and stood quietly gazing around him, while not a shadow of fear was visible upon his face, though it was very pale.

Coming forward from the crowd, Colonel Aldano grasped his hand and said, while his voice trembled:

"Mordaunt, you are a noble man, and are teaching your enemies how a brave man can die. I will look after all those you love. Now, my dear friend, farewell!" And the Colonel hastily turned from the spot, his feelings almost overcoming him, brave man though he was.

The men were formed in line a few paces from the doomed man, and the Captain, who had come there with the prisoner, motioned that all was ready.

Every eye was turned upon the dauntless American, as he stood there, with not a tremor of emotion, and faced his executioners. Then his clear, distinct, tenor-like tones were heard by all:

"Captain, I am ready!"

A word from the officer was answered by a peal of musketry.

Frank Mordaunt fell dead upon the ground.

Then—every ear was startled by the piercing shriek of a woman, which was heard above the solemn roll of the muffled drums.

It was May Hill who had sent that long, loud cry of anguish into the morning air, and as Colonel Aldano caught her in his arms, he feared her life had gone out with the volley that had sent Mordaunt's soul into the realms of repose.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DEPARTURE FROM CUBA.

A month passed, but on leaden wings, after the execution of Mordaunt, to that little Patriot band in their cavern prison.

They had been told by Colonel Aldano of the fate of their commander, and bitterly did they grieve for his loss. Edwardo was rapidly improving, but the smile had gone from his face, and as he glanced at his empty sleeve, and thought of the death of his friend—the noblest Roman of them all—his lips would look hard and stern, and cause him to seem as if years, not days, had passed over his head since the fatal fight was lost.

For days after Mordaunt's death, May Hill had been fearfully ill, and had raved in delirium, but gradually her mind came back to her, and her strong constitution conquered the awful shock she had received.

She had a loving, tender nurse in Colonel Aldano, for almost night and day he stood beside her bed and soothed her pain.

Bonito and his wife had also been devoted in their kindness, and after three weeks of sickness, May was able to be out again, and though she looked worn and pale, her face had a resigned look, as though she would bear her sorrows in silence.

"Miss Hill, I have come in to tell you that I have made every arrangement for your comfort in the little schooner, and think if you are well enough to undertake the voyage, you had better start night after next," said Colonel Aldano, as he joined May upon the little seat in front of Bonito's cabin.

"I am well enough, Colonel Aldano, and will be ready. But, oh! how can I thank you for all you have done for me, and for—Frank, dear, dear friend that you have been?"

"By not remembering that I have done aught else than my duty, Miss Hill."

"I shall regret to part with you, Colonel Aldano, for you have been as a dear brother to me," and May extended her hand with a cordiality and confidence which proved the sincerity and depth of feeling for the noble Spaniard.

"You will not have to part from me, Miss Hill—at least, not now, for I intend to accompany you to your island home in the far north, before I leave you."

"Oh, my dear friend, how much trouble I am to you!"

"Not at all, Senorita. I have long been sick and tired of war, as waged by my Government here in this unhappy island, and some time since sent in my resignation. It was accepted, and I am going to return to Spain, but first will see you safely in your parents' charge.

"Now I must go and see to the crew being in readiness," and raising his hat, the Colonel left for the cavern, while May, taking up a sun hat, walked up the road toward Buena Vista.

After going for a mile along the road, she turned into a path leading into the woods, and soon came upon a small graveyard with an iron fence around it.

This was the last resting place of the Valientes, and a new made grave within the enclosure marked a new burial.

Advancing to the grave, May knelt beside it, and her eyes fell upon the head-board, which read:

"FRANK MORDAUNT,

Commander of

Cuban Privateer

HORNET.

Born in the United States.

Died in the service of Cuba.

Aged 30 years."

Upon the night that Aldano had appointed, the band of Patriots left their cavern home and embarked on board the little schooner which was anchored in the cove awaiting their coming.

Aldano and May had already gone on board, and found Bonito, Juan, and another negro, who was to go along with the fisherman to aid in bringing back the schooner.

Soon the party came off in the boat. The pleasant little cabin made comfortable by Colonel Aldano, was assigned to May, and Edwardo, while the rest of the passengers arranged themselves with what comfort they could.

The anchor was raised and the schooner left Cuba and its sorrows, its desolate homes, and its new-made graves, far behind, and shaped her course for New Orleans, where the weary crew of the privateer longed to find a home in which they might rest and in quietude forget the dangers they had known in the service of the patriot cause.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

Seated upon the verandah of this little cottage home, near New Orleans, some two months after their departure from Cuba, were Senora Valiente and Nita Gonzalez.

A look of deepest sadness rested upon the faces of each, and the silver threads that had gathered on the temples of the senora showed that care and sorrow had left their impress upon her.

"Here come two gentlemen, Senora," said Nita, rising. "Yes; and as I live, they are Edwardo and Colonel Aldano!" and, throwing down her book, the young girl rushed forward and was clasped to Edwardo's heart, and while he greeted her he said, bitterly:

"I cannot put my arms around you now, Nita; you see I have but one," and he pointed to his empty sleeve.

Colonel Aldano received a warm greeting, and all entered the house. Then Edwardo learned that Inez had given up the world and its pleasures and entering a convent had become a nun.

It was a sad blow to him, but he felt that the star of her life had gone down in the gloom of Mordaunt's grave, and he could not blame her for what she had done, for the Cruiser Captain had been her idol—her all.

Colonel Aldano spoke of their trip over, and told the seaman that De Silva was going on to New York to again report for duty. Bonito, with Juan, had already started upon their return to the island.

Of May Hill, the Colonel said little—only that she was awaiting his return at the hotel; and that he would then take her North to her parents.

After an hour's stay, and a promise to visit them upon his return south, which he said would be in a month, Colonel Aldano took leave of his friends, and returned to the city.

A week after we see him and May Hill standing together upon the promenade, before spoken of in this story, which commands a view of the city and harbor of Portland.

They had been looking out over the harbor, and having arrived that afternoon were discussing the best means of getting to the island which, months before, May had left to follow the fortunes of Frank Mordaunt.

May was saying:

"Colonel Aldano, I feel certain that I can run a sail boat down to the island, and if there is danger of a storm we can put in to some inlet on the coast. I know that father would prefer I should come that way."

"Very well, Miss Hill; I obey; so, if you will return to the hotel, I will go down and charter a sail boat, and to-morrow morning early we can start for your island home."

Dick Hill was standing upon the high point of land upon his island looking seaward, when he descried a small boat approaching, and, as it came on, he observed that it followed the channel in a way which showed there was some one at the helm well acquainted with the sunken rocks and reefs that blocked the approach to the island inlet.

Hastening down to the beach landing, it was but a brief time when his daughter's arms were around his neck.

Mrs. Hill had seen her husband run down the hill and followed, and her mother's heart was made glad by welcoming the long-lost daughter home again. They had learned how she had gone off on the privateer schooner, and fully believed that they would never see her again; but here she was—alive and well—their own true daughter, home again!

May presented Colonel Aldano, and that night, around the hearthstone, the sad story of the scenes through which she had passed was related to her parents. With her, they mourned sincerely for the matchless Mordaunt and his officers.

Two weeks passed, and Colonel Aldano bade adieu to his island friends, to start south to keep his promise made to Edwardo.

Though the gallant Spaniard had learned to love May devotedly, he had kept his feelings to himself, and had only asked her to allow him to come again. She had willingly granted that request, and a day was appointed when Hill should meet him at Portland.

Alone in his little boat, for he wished it so, Colonel Aldano returned to Portland, and then took the cars for New Orleans, and upon his arrival there was gladly welcomed by his friends.

A week after his arrival, Edwardo Valiente and Nita Gonzalez were married quietly in their cottage home, and soon after, Colonel Aldano returned north, and at the appointed day found "Skipper" Hill awaiting him in Portland.

During the sail to the island, Hill remarked casually, but in a manner which indicated that he deemed an explanation necessary:

"Colonel, do not think that I live away from my fellow men because I have been guilty of crime, for such is not the case. I was once rich, and my nearest relatives and dearest friends robbed me of all I possessed; so, becoming dissatisfied with the hollow deceit of the world, I went with my wife and child to the island upon which I now live, and since then it has been my home, and one very dear to me, I assure you."

How gladly did May greet the Colonel upon his return, for his warm sympathy for her, his many acts of kindness toward her, and his love for Mordaunt

had kindled in her heart a feeling akin to love, though the passion of her life was buried in Cuba; and so she told Aldano when he asked her to be his wife.

"But you will love me all you can, May?" he asked.

"I will, Colonel Aldano, for you are very, very dear to me!" was her frank answer.

A few days later the little household all sailed for Portland, and there the Colonel and May were married, and while Hill and his wife returned to their lonely island, Colonel Aldano carried his lovely bride to Spain, where she became a reigning belle in the society of the Spanish capital.

No one ever suspected the strange romance of her life, and many wondered why the gallant Spanish Colonel, in the very height of his military career, had resigned from the army, and seemed content to settle down to this life of a country gentleman.

When at last the Lone Star Flag of the Cuban Patriots went down in gloom, tender memories among those who had fought so well for the lost cause would cluster about the graves of the gallant dead that dotted the hills and valleys of the Ever-Faithful Isle.

And there, to-day, still rests the ashes of Frank Mordaunt, the "Conspirator Captain," as he is called by the Spaniards; but over the grave, in the Valiente burying ground, within view of the sea he loved so well, and where the surfer moans a requiem to his memory, a marble tomb has been erected by Inez, who still dwells within convent walls, loved by all who gaze upon her sadly beautiful face.

But her lost love—the bitter romance of her life—she keeps locked within her own heart, from which can never be effaced the image of the Cruiser Captain.

THE END.

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